

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF THE HISTORIAN HERODOTUS

by

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ABSTRACT

Herodotus of Halicarnassus was born into an age in which his fellow Greeks were asking themselves more political questions than they had ever done before. The reason is that many of them were taking upon themselves greater shares in the governments of their states, depriving absolute tyrants or oligarchic cliques of their power and assuming it themselves. In many cases the whole citizen-body would rule, forming constitutions that they called democracies. As these communities felt their way politically, the people asked themselves, collectively and individually, "what is the best form of government?"

I have made it my task to find out how Herodotus, the father of history, would have answered that question. In his work he surveyed nearly every form of government, nearly every level of civilization attained by the various communities of his time. Which of these did he admire, and of which did he disapprove? I have studied certain instances where he records how political institutions motivated the people of his history, and I have observed a pattern that is repeated at numerous times in Herodotus' work. He believed that great deeds were more likely to come from men who believed themselves free than from men deprived of their freedom by an absolute and irresponsible ruler or government.

In his third book, Herodotus studies some irresponsible rulers of the past and shows recurring patterns in their behaviour. In the middle of the book,

he presents a debate by seven Persians on the subject of the best government for Persia, where, by composing the speeches of the debaters, he gives a summary of his own political ideas. To him tyrants are often deceitful, and characteristically abuse established laws and customs; they take men's wives and daughters by force, and murder men untried. However, in democracy there is not the tyrant's abuse of law, but equality before the law, and, by governing themselves, men control their own destiny without violent interference from a tyrant.

These views are reflected in many places throughout Herodotus' work. Different speakers make statements that seem to reveal that they shared the same opinions. Now Herodotus will tell a story that illustrates the evils of tyranny, and now he will pass a judgement that betrays his faith in freedom, especially democracy.

I have collected many of the above instances in this study and have discovered some absorbing details of the methods Herodotus employed to suggest political evaluations to his audience without any open statement. Some events are presented like one-act plays, others like full-length tragedies with character studies subtly introduced to betray the historian's sympathies. With a knowledge of these devices, the reader is in a position to obtain a deeper understanding of Herodotus and his history.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements	v
	List of Abbreviations	vi
I	The Problem	1
II	Background for the War - Politics in Book I	8
III	Debate and Decision in Persia	22
IV	The Ionian Revolt	43
V	The Trial of Athenian Democracy	53
VI	Thermopylae - a Win for Persia, a Victory for Sparta	69
VII	The Epilogue of Herodotus' History	87
VIII	Herodotus' System of Political Cause	96
	Bibliographies	
	Ancient Sources	111
	Modern Sources	112

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AJA</u>	<u>American Journal of Archaeology</u>
<u>AJP</u>	<u>American Journal of Philology</u>
<u>BSA</u>	<u>Annual of the British School at Athens</u>
<u>CJ</u>	<u>Classical Journal</u>
<u>CP</u>	<u>Classical Philology</u>
<u>CQ</u>	<u>Classical Quarterly</u>
<u>Hermes</u>	<u>Hermes, Zeitschrift für classische Philologie</u>
<u>HSCP</u>	<u>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</u>
<u>JHS</u>	<u>Journal of Hellenic Studies</u>
<u>JNES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</u>
<u>TAPA</u>	<u>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</u>

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

This study is an attempt to establish the political point of view of the historian Herodotus. I shall examine his work in order to find those institutions he preferred, those he criticised, and the method he used to praise or criticise them. That he had political preferences or biases we can safely assume, for he was, however unusual, a human being.

Discussion of the political point of view of the historian must involve a consideration of political causation as it is found in his work. This too, therefore, will concern me, and I shall try to answer the question whether or not Herodotus thought that the political institutions of his time had any effect on how his antagonists, Greece and Persia, came together for the final conflict in the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale. I shall also show how Herodotus leads us to anticipate the result of certain of these battles and of the war itself by his critical analysis of the political forces that were driving the antagonists together. By "critical analysis of the political forces" I mean that his method of presenting the antagonists is such as to display the weak or strong points of their political institutions, and to show how it was that these institutions did or did not qualify as forces likely to produce victors in battle. Finally, I shall make it clear how in his opinion political decisions and environments, once made or formed, led both to the clash and to its outcome.

To two Greek historians, Polybius and Thucydides, politics were inextricably involved in history. Polybius saw that the greatness of Rome lay in its constitution,¹ Thucydides that the reason for the failure of Athens lay in its politics and constitution.² Did this interest of historians in politics begin with Thucydides? Can we go back to Herodotus and find in him the origin of the writing of political history, history that studies political institutions and presents them as both historical cause and historical effect?

Some of Herodotus' ablest critics have failed to see in him any systematic point of view in political matters. Indeed, he is often regarded as rather a garrulous old yarn-spinner than a historian,³ his work an epic as much as a history,⁴ and his interest more in the deed and its greatness than in its cause, whether political or otherwise.⁵ While it may seem a rare experience to the reader to note Herodotus discovering political cause, nevertheless political opinions are present in his work, even if they are not always on the surface. For him, causal connections between constitutions and events do indeed exist.

There are passages, however, in which Herodotus makes explicit the existence of causal connections between political conditions and subsequent

¹Polybius VI 1-6.

²M. F. McGregor, "The Politics of the Historian Thucydides," Phoenix X (1956) pp. 93-102.

³G. F. Abbot, Thucydides, a Study in Historical Reality (London, 1925) pp. 10-11.

⁴J. B. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians (London, 1909) pp. 58-60.

⁵J. H. Finley, Jr., Thucydides (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1963) p. 18.

historical events. I mention the two outstanding examples. The first is in Book V, where Athens has just survived a three-pronged attack by Chalcis, Thebes, and Sparta in glorious fashion. The reason for Athens' success, according to Herodotus, is that she was a democracy:

"So Athens grew. It is clear not on any one but on every consideration that democracy is a desirable thing. When the Athenians were under the tyrants they were no better than their neighbours in war; but when rid of the tyrants, they became foremost in battle. This is clear also, therefore, that, when they were ruled, they shirked their duty since they were working for a despot; but, when free, each individual was eager to press on with the task for himself."⁶

Thus the success of Athens, in this campaign at least, is explained in terms of her political institutions and their history. "When the Athenians were under the tyrants" is a reference to the period of Pisistratid rule already discussed by the historian. Similarly, "when rid of the tyrants" refers to the preceding narrative, part of which Herodotus devoted to the expulsion of the Pisistratidae and the appearance of Athenian democracy.

The second clear example of a historical cause in terms of previously described political institutions is found in Book VII. Here, not long before the battle of Thermopylae, Xerxes reviews his forces, summons Demaratus, the exiled Spartan king, and asks him if the Greeks will fight so large a force.

Demaratus says that he cannot answer for the other Greeks but he can for the

⁶Herodotus V 78.

Spartans: they will gain a victory or die to a man, but they will never abandon their post in battle. Xerxes asks him what despot is driving them into battle so. The answer comes that there is not a human despot, only the intangible nomos of the Spartans, which will not let them retreat. Xerxes laughs, Demaratus leaves. By the end of Book VII, however, the Spartan nomos has emerged as an awesome thing, for it has caused the Spartans to do exactly as Demaratus said they would. As I shall point out later, the words of Demaratus contain allusions to previous descriptions of the Spartan constitution. Indeed, Herodotus anticipates the actions of the combatants at Thermopylae by alluding to their respective political situations. The Spartans have their nomos, which makes them free; the Persians have their monarch, who enslaves them.

Throughout this section in Book VII Herodotus, sometimes using the words of Demaratus, sometimes relying upon an illustration, characterizes slaves and free men in such a way that we know what to expect from each side before the test at Thermopylae. From this I suggest that the Herodotean method of discovering historical cause is sometimes—indeed, is usually—the same as that which Mme de Romilly has discovered in Thucydides; the situation is described, the actors are introduced, we are given a general remark on what men of this nature are wont to do in these situations, and, when we are presented with the outcome, we are not at all surprised, because it is what we were deliberately led to expect.⁷

⁷J. de Romilly, Histoire et raison chez Thucydide (Paris, 1956) pp. 173-179.

If it is true that Herodotus anticipates the outcome of a historical event by describing its cause beforehand, in preference to the technique of explaining a result in retrospect like some modern historians, then the discussion of Athenian laxness in battle under the tyrants and valour under democracy may not be merely an explanation in retrospect but also a premonition of the great deeds of the future now that the Athenians are free. Herodotus expects free people to fight well and enslaved people to shirk their duty. These judgements prepare the reader for the outcome of the Greco-Persian war. To Herodotus, the Greeks who led the resistance were free, while the Persians were slaves of the despot Xerxes. We therefore can expect victory for the Greeks and for Xerxes defeat.

This arrangement looks neat, but what will Herodotus do with the Persian empire itself, which, though its members were enslaved by a monarch, had suffered few major defeats until the invasion of Greece? In the epilogue to his history, he seems to find the answer to the success of the Persian empire both in the harshness and severity of circumstances in which its people lived when Cyrus took control, and in the decision of the people to remain in these circumstances, denying themselves the soft and easy life of the plain. Herodotus, however, makes it clear that the Persians were hardly denying themselves any longer by the time of the invasion of Greece and that it was the Greeks who were now living in harsh and severe surroundings.⁸ For these reasons, in

⁸See especially Herodotus IX 82, where Pausanias compares a Greek meal with a Persian feast in order to demonstrate this notion.

part at least, the Persians began as victors under Cyrus but ended as losers under Xerxes.

This remark in the epilogue explaining the early greatness of Persia is an example of the retrospective method of discovering historical cause and it is rare in Herodotus. He reserves this method for re-iterating causes that interest him highly as, for example, the discussion of Athenian valour. Herodotus' usual method is to give causes once, and then before the event. When he repeats the cause after the event, however, we are provided with a kind of yardstick to measure the importance the historian attached to the idea.

It may be argued, however, that I have gone beyond my subject. Of what interest is it to the student of the political ideas of Herodotus that he found the cause of the greatness of Persia in her rugged environment? To be sure, so long as there is no connection between politics and natural environment, it is not of the utmost interest in itself. Nevertheless, Demaratus feels that from their harsh environment the Greeks nourished their love of freedom and, in the case of the Spartans especially, their political constitution. What about the Persians, did they gain freedom from their rugged environment? No, but Herodotus did think that the seven conspirators could deliberate seriously whether Persia should be given a democracy. Of all the arguments that Herodotus believed were brought forward in the debate, not one amounted to a charge that the Persians were not ready for, or suited to have, a democracy. The critics of democracy argued that it would have worked badly, but at least it would have worked. So Herodotus seems to have accepted

the thesis that a rugged environment helped adapt a people for a free constitution, while a luxurious one helped make them slaves. He states this in the epilogue, where the Persians deliberate whether or not to remain in harsh surroundings. After consideration they chose to remain. To Herodotus this meant that then and there they elected to be rulers of men rather than live an easy life as slaves.⁹ This was the most important decision in the history of Persia, indeed of the whole world of Herodotus' time.

My task, then, is to explore the mind of Herodotus through his work. This is not a study of Herodotus, the searcher for right political views, but of the Greek who has established his political views, of a historian who loved freedom and who wrote to inspire a similar love in his contemporaries and their succeeding generations.

⁹I have paraphrased what he actually says in IX 122. 4.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND FOR THE WAR - POLITICS IN BOOK I

Herodotus begins his history by showing how the Persians put the blame on the Greeks for the Greco-Persian war. He says that certain wise men trace back to the Phoenicians a chain-reaction of abductions of women starting with Io and ending with Helen.¹ It was in the Trojan war the Persians allege, that one finds the first cause of the war. As Herodotus proceeds he gradually introduces more and more discordant voices until the Persian story fades into a babble of allegations and countercharges.² Out of this confusion Herodotus simply rises and says, "I am not come to tell how it happened one way or another, but whom I myself know first to have begun injustices against the Hellenes, him shall I point out"³ What was this beginning of injustices to which Herodotus refers? The answer comes almost immediately:

"This Croesus was the first of the barbarians of whom we know to have reduced certain of the Greeks to the position of tributaries, and to have made friendly alliances with others. He subdued the Ionians, Aeolians, and Dorians who were in Asia and made friends with the Lacedaemonians. Before the reign of Croesus all the Greeks had been free."

For Herodotus, then, the condition that led to the war was the loss of autonomy by certain Hellenic states to a barbarian.

¹Herodotus I 1-4.

²Herodotus I 5. 1-2.

³Herodotus I 5. 3.

For the rest of the history Herodotus describes the struggle in which the Greek states eventually stopped the progress of the Persian invaders and sent them home. This done, he has finished his work, he has saved the great deeds of Greek and barbarian from obliteration by time, and should have indicated something of the causes of the war, his avowed purpose as stated at the outset of his history.⁴ He does not have to show how all the Greek states, including those of Asia Minor, were delivered from the barbarian. To do that would have taken him to the battle of the Eurymedon or to the Peace of Callias.⁵ Herodotus ignored these events and intentionally closed his work with the Greeks at Sestos.⁶

It may be that there were some whom Herodotus knew who thought that the war had its beginnings in the Cimmerian invasion of Asia Minor and their sacking of certain Greek cities there. At any rate Herodotus seems to be aware of their theory, for he alludes to it as well as to that of the Persians.⁷ If the Cimmerians did invade, and sack, Greek lands and cities in force as Herodotus

⁴Herodotus I 1.

⁵Giving a résumé of Kirchhoff's theory about the relative completion of Herodotus' work How and Wells say: "The capture of Sestus is no real end to the Persian wars; this must be found in the battle of the Eurymedon, if not in the 'Peace of Callias.'" They go on to state, however, that they do not agree with Kirchhoff's theory. W. W. How and J. Wells, A Commentary on Herodotus, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964) p. 15.

⁶That he did so intentionally I shall demonstrate in a later chapter.

⁷The longest treatment of the Cimmerian invasion in Herodotus is at IV 12.

seems to have believed they did, why did he not go back to their invasion to find the first cause of the war? What appears to be his answer to that question is significant: the Cimmerian invasion was a pillaging raid.⁸

Although pillagers do perform acts of injustice upon their victims and these acts may require some form of revenge, Herodotus passes by the motifs of revenge offered him by the tales of abductions and by the more tempting, because it is more recent, Cimmerian invasion.⁹ He has chosen instead as the beginning of his history the occasion on which an abiding state of hostility between Greek and barbarian was established. Indeed, as Herodotus himself must have been aware, coming from Halicarnassus, this subjugation of Greek states by the force of arms, first by Croesus and then, with no intervening period of release, by Cyrus, was an enduring one, lasting into the lifetime of the historian himself. So the first cause of the war was not a mere military intrusion by barbarians into certain Greek states of Asia Minor, but the first act of aggression with intent to subjugate; it was to establish a lasting state of political tension between Greek and barbarian.

Croesus wanted a powerful ally on the opposite shore of the Aegean. He therefore made an investigation into the general state of affairs of mainland

⁸Herodotus I 6. 3, τὸ γὰρ Κιμμερίων στράτευμα τὸ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰονίην ἀπικόμενον, Κροίσου ἐὼν πρεσβύτερον, οὐ καταστροφὴ ἐγένετο τῶν πολιῶν, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς ἀρπαγῆ.

⁹According to Henry R. Immerwahr, "Aspects of Historical Causation in Herodotus," TAPA LXXXVII (1956), pp. 241-280, revenge is the most common form of historical motivation in Herodotus.

Greece. His investigation led him to choose the Lacedaemonians after considering the Athenians, according to Herodotus.¹⁰ If he did examine Athens and Sparta in the way that Herodotus describes, it is possible that he enquired about other states as well, such as Thebes, Corinth, or Argos. Whatever other enquiries were made, Herodotus reports only what Croesus allegedly discovered about Athens and Sparta. The reason for this is not puzzling. Herodotus is anxious to give an account of the rise and development of the two states that were to play so important a part in the expulsion of the Persian invader.

Athens, we are told, was now under the tyrant Pisistratus. He had come to power under heavy opposition, had been expelled twice, and had finally been able to "root" his tyranny in Athenian soil. He was no longer a young man, however, and Croesus had no way of telling what would happen to an alliance with him after his death, but if he considered the unstable past of the Pisistratids, he might have easily concluded that their future was still in some doubt.¹¹ The affairs of Sparta, however, had settled into a much more stable condition.

"The Lacedaemonians had just escaped from serious trouble and were now the victors in war over the Tegeans. For in the kingship of Leon and Hegesicles in Sparta they had been fortunate against their other enemies

¹⁰Herodotus I 56. 2, ἱστορέων δὲ εὗρισκε Λακεδαιμονίους τε καὶ Ἀθηναίους προέχοντας.

¹¹Herodotus I 59-64.

but were worsted by the Tegeans alone. And in the time before these events they had been in a state of utter disobedience to law worse than nearly all the other Greeks in their own affairs, and with strangers inexperienced. The following is an account of how they changed to a state of obedience to law."¹²

Herodotus shows that, after certain changes in their constitution, the Spartans managed to become the masters of the Tegeans as well.

Although Herodotus makes no lengthy constitutional analysis of the laws of Lycurgus, the changes he mentions are significant.

"As soon as he had become his guardian, he changed all the laws and took precautions that no one would transgress them. In military matters Lycurgus established the enomotiae, the triecodae, and the common messes, and in addition he made the offices of ephor and elder."¹³

The common messes and the new offices indicate that there was an increase in participation of the individual in the affairs of state both in peace and war. When we consider that the context is the change of Spartan fortunes in war, and that before these changes the Spartans were only moderately successful in war, at times even failures, and that after them they became successful, we are surely led to suspect that the relationship between the events—bad luck in war, change to a more open constitution, good luck in war—is a causal one. The reason for the change in fortune is the change in constitution.

¹²Herodotus I 65. 1-2.

¹³Herodotus I 65. 5.

We might regard the foregoing conclusion as certain but for the fact that the Spartans were defeated in their next engagement with the Tegeans soon after the change in constitution.¹⁴ This defeat prompted the Spartans to enquire of Delphi how they might capture Tegea. The oracle told them that they must find and bring to Sparta the bones of Orestes, the son of Agamemnon. Once the Spartans succeeded in this task they managed to get the better of their enemy.

No doubt the critic¹⁵ who regards Herodotus as a "pious" historian (presumably meaning that he is god-fearing or religious, always looking for the hand of god in history) would claim that this story illustrates his conclusions. He might suggest that Herodotus mentally attached some supernatural power to the bones that made them able to give their possessor victory. He might argue, therefore, that Herodotus makes a divine power as much the cause of Spartan success over Tegea as the Lycurgan constitution. Against this it should be said that our critic must first assume that Herodotus was "pious" in order to see piety in this story. It is possible, therefore, that his piety is as much in "the eye of the beholder" as actually there in Herodotus.

Below I shall examine the possibility that Herodotus is studying human nature under the new Lycurgan constitution, when he tells the story of the bones of Orestes. However, I shall first consider the suggestion that Herodotus is

¹⁴Herodotus I 65. 5.

¹⁵For discussions of Herodotus' piety see How and Wells II p. 181, and G. B. Grundy, The Great Persian War and its Preliminaries (London, 1901) p. 565.

showing us the hand of a god at work in this story. This raises the problem of the nature of the god or gods in whom Herodotus believed. We cannot simply say that he was god-fearing, for that reveals nothing. If we are to call him "god-fearing," we must define the god or gods we think he feared. His gods were not like those of Homer or Hesiod. He thought that the characters and genealogies of these gods were the creations of the poets. According to the oracle of Dodona, which Herodotus quotes on the subject, before Homer and Hesiod the Greeks worshipped nameless, characterless gods, theoi, as the thentes, or arrangers of the universe.¹⁶ While abandoning the Homeric and Hesiodic systems, he refused to substitute his own on the ground that each man knew as much as any other on the questions of theology.

"Now I am not eager to expound on such divine matters as I have heard from my informants, with the sole exception of divine names; for I think that everyone knows as much as the next one about them. What I shall mention about them, I shall because I am forced to by my account. As for human affairs, however,"¹⁷

Here Herodotus renounces definite knowledge of the nature of the gods. To him, theological speculation was futile.

The gods, whoever they are, do intervene in history, however. Herodotus

¹⁶ Herodotus II 52-53.

¹⁷ Herodotus II 3. 2, 4. 1. On this passage I largely accept the views of I. M. Linforth, "Herodotus' Avowal of Silence in his Account of Egypt," University of California Publications in Classical Philology VII (1924) pp. 269-292.

says that the destruction of Troy was proof that there are "great punishments from the gods."¹⁸ Yet when we read Herodotus' version of the Trojan war, we note that it is wanting in divine appearances and intervention.¹⁹ He asserts that Paris was driven to Egypt by an adverse wind, where both Menelaus' money and Helen were taken from Paris by the Egyptians and held in trust until Menelaus should come and claim them. The Greeks, he continues, came to Troy and demanded Helen. The Trojans, of course, said that she was not there. The Greeks, assuming this to be a lie, laid siege to the city. According to Herodotus, however, the Trojans were telling the truth. Early in his history he tells us that the barbarians do not regard the snatching of women as a matter for fighting.²⁰ He therefore cannot believe that, if the Trojans had had Helen there, they would have fought in order that Paris might keep her, instead of returning her to the Greeks. To Herodotus, the fact that she was not returned indicates that she was not there. The Greeks persisted in their refusal to believe that she was not in Troy, and consequently, in their belligerence. The result was the destruction of Troy, a catastrophe that could and would have been avoided had not the wind driven Helen and Paris to Egypt.

"But no, they did not have Helen there to give back. Nor did the Greeks believe them though they told the truth. I shall tell you my opinion. It was all divinely arranged so that these events might make it clear to

¹⁸Herodotus II 120. 5.

¹⁹Herodotus II 116-120.

²⁰Herodotus I 4.

mankind that, as great are the crimes, so great are the punishments from the gods. I declare it because I think it true."²¹

On the view of Herodotus, then, Troy fell because the wind was blowing in the wrong direction when Paris was trying to sail home with Helen. Had it been blowing in the right direction, Helen would have been there and would have been returned to save the city from destruction. To us the direction of the wind is an accident or a quirk of fortune over which we have no control, to Herodotus it was δαίμων παρασκευάζων, god.

It appears that Herodotus' "gods" in history are the intrusions of the accidental, blind chance, or quirks of fortune. I present a few more examples. Croesus was punished by god for his hybris by the accidental murder of his son Atys.²² The "murderer" had no reason to try to kill Atys, but every reason to protect him; and he was trying to do so conscientiously. A storm caught both Greek and Persian fleets at sea. Two hundred Persian ships were separated from the main force and exposed, when the storm struck, and were all destroyed as a consequence. The Greeks, however, were well protected. Therefore, the storm struck at a favourable moment for the Greeks. So chance, or god, was working for the Greeks against the Persians.²³ In one place Herodotus reveals that the accident that punishes is itself subject to chance. The Spartans were punished by god for committing a crime while the Athenians were not, though

²¹Herodotus II 120. 5.

²²Herodotus I 34-45.

²³Herodotus VII 12-13.

they had committed the same crime.²⁴ So the retribution was not inevitable. Otherwise, the Athenians would have been punished also. To Herodotus, it seems, man was the cause of the predictable in history, but god of the accidental or unpredictable.

The story of the recovery of the bones of Orestes is different from the above accounts of divine intervention. Far from showing how the Spartan success over Tegea was the result of an accident or a quirk of fortune, it shows how it was the product of the wisdom and diligence of Liches the Spartan.²⁵ He went to Tegea, possibly on his own business, but more likely sent there by the state as one of the agathoergoi. However we may look at it, he had taken the cares of his state with him, for, when a smith told him a marvellous tale about some huge bones he had found, Liches began to think about the riddle from Delphi. The Delphic oracle had told the Spartans that they must recover the bones of Orestes from Tegea before they could hope for success over the Tegeans. What is more, a second riddling oracle had more concealed than revealed the place where the bones could be found.²⁶ Thereupon, Liches puzzled out the answer to the riddle, had himself apparently banished from his country, bought the shop from the unwilling smith who owned the plot of ground in which the bones lay, dug up the bones and transported them back to Sparta. The reason for Liches' diligence on behalf of the Spartan state must be that his country's success

²⁴ Herodotus VII 133.

²⁵ The words of Herodotus are; . . . καὶ συντυχίῃ χρησάμενος καὶ σοφίῃ.

²⁶ Herodotus I 67.

and his own were identified in his mind.

Herodotus makes it clear that Liches belonged to a class of men in the Spartan constitution, the agathoergoi, formed regularly and maintained from those who graduated from the hippeis in the army.²⁷ Lycurgus changed all the laws and took precautions that no one would transgress them.²⁸ This means the establishment of sweeping changes in the Spartan constitution affecting, presumably, the agathoergoi like all other institutions. Liches, an able and diligent man, was thus given an opportunity to prove his worth and benefit his state by the provisions of the Lycurgan constitution. The conclusion to which we are led is that the cause of the eventual Spartan conquest of Tegea was the εὐνομία established by Lycurgus.²⁹

After the account of the Spartan victory over Tegea, Herodotus returns to the fall of Croesus and the rise of Persia. Croesus misinterprets an ambiguous oracle and marches to the destruction of himself and his empire at the hands of Cyrus king of Persia. Perhaps Herodotus is discovering historical cause in divine intervention here, but there is another cause suggested for the success of Persia over Lydia. Sandanis, the wise adviser of

²⁷ Herodotus I 67. 5. Their work is thus described: τοὺς δεῖ τοῦτον τὸν ἐνιαυτόν, τὸν ἄν ἐξίωσι ἐκ τῶν ἱππέων, Σπαρτιητέων τῷ κοινῷ διαπεμπομένους μὴ ἐλινύειν ἄλλους ἄλλη.

²⁸ Herodotus I 65. 5.

²⁹ To Herodotus, εὐνομία seemed to mean something like good order, the rule of law, or obedience to law. For discussions of this word and its meaning see Victor Ehrenberg, Aspects of the Ancient World (Oxford, 1946) pp. 70-93; J. L. Myres, "EYNOMIA," CR LXI (1947) pp. 80-81; and especially A. Andrewes, "Eunomia," CQ XXXII (1938) pp. 89-102.

Croesus, outlines this cause in the following way:

"O king, these are the kind of men against whom you are preparing to march. They wear leather breeches, of leather too are their other clothes; they do not eat as much as they choose, but as much as they have. They occupy a rough country. In addition, they drink no wine, only water; they have no figs to eat nor any other delicacy. Look at it this way: if you defeat them, you will take nothing from men who have nothing; and this way: if you are defeated, know how many fine things you will throw away. For once they have tasted our standard of living they will grasp it with an unshakeable tenacity. For my part I thank the gods that they have not put it into the minds of the Persians to attack the Lydians."³⁰

That the environment has a direct bearing on the people who live in it and hence an indirect political significance is guaranteed for us by the very last sentence of Herodotus' work. "So they chose to be rulers and to occupy a barren country rather than to till the plains and be to other men slaves."³¹ The Persians, therefore, because they have chosen to live in rough surroundings, will be a formidable people, from whom a wise man expects to gain nothing but to whom he will lose much when it comes to a contest of arms. In the history of Herodotus the wise man was Sandanis, the fool Croesus. When the fool turns down the wise man's advice, all he can expect is the disaster

³⁰Herodotus I 71. 2-4. For a general discussion of the wise adviser in Herodotus see R. Lattimore, "The Wise Adviser in Herodotus," CP XXXIV (1939) pp. 24-35. On Herodotus' use of the wise adviser to comment upon and explain his work see also Lieselotte Solmsen, "Speeches in Herodotus' Account of the Battle of Plataea," CP XXXIX (1944) pp. 242-243.

³¹Herodotus IX 122. 4.

predicted by the sage. If we too are wise when we read the history of Herodotus we do not have to ask after the event why Cyrus defeated Croesus. Sandanis gave us the reason before the catastrophe.

At the end of Book I of his history, Herodotus relates the death of Cyrus while engaged in attacking the Massagetae. The story of this campaign contains a different picture of Persia from the one given by Sandanis. Croesus says to Cyrus:

"As far as I have learned, the Massagetae are inexperienced in the luxuries of Persia and have no knowledge of the refinements of life. Cut up for them, therefore, many generous portions of cattle, prepare and serve them as a feast in your camp. Add generous bowls of neat wine and all kinds of food. Do this and leave behind the weakest part of your camp as you withdraw with the rest to the river. Unless I am mistaken, when the Massagetae see the fine banquet, they will turn to it. Thereupon it remains to us to display deeds of greatness."³²

The Persians, now making use of their new-found luxuries instead of trusting to their rugged environment, lost in their struggle with the Massagetae in spite of their treachery. Their self-discipline was beginning to decay and failure in battle was the result.

Cyrus, the night before he died, dreamed that he saw the eldest son of Hystaspes, Darius, with wings that covered Asia and Europe. He interpreted this to mean that Darius was plotting against him. So the last thing that Cyrus

³²Herodotus I 207. 6.

initiated before the battle that led to his death was an investigation into a suspected plot against the throne. The fears for the dynasty that were to compel Xerxes to invade Greece, as I shall show in a later chapter, were already besetting the Persian king in the time of Cyrus.

Thus Book I introduces the political forces, with the exception of Athenian democracy, that were to lead to the war and those that were to guide its outcome. The Spartans have gained their eunomia, which will make them resist and help them win. The dynastic struggles that will give Persia her need for military expansion are beginning, if only in the great king's imagination. Finally, the self-control and self-discipline that are reflected in the Persian decision to remain in the rugged surroundings of the hills are fast vanishing. This will lead to the incompetence and ineffectiveness of the Persian hordes in the invasion of Greece.

CHAPTER III

DEBATE AND DECISION IN PERSIA

Anyone reading the third book of Herodotus for the first time can hardly suppress the desire to treat it with considerable scepticism. There are sheep with little carts supporting their very long tails, lionesses that bear only one cub in their lives, flying snakes and gold-digging ants; there is the fantastic story of Polycrates and his ring; and there is the debate among seven Persians in which they consider democracy, more, it would seem, like fifth-century Greeks than sixth-century Persians.¹ At first glance this material seems to make the third book of Herodotus all but worthless.

It is not worthless, however. Where it is demonstrably accurate, it is of value to tell us something about the past, and, where wrong, to tell us something about Herodotus. As a general rule, I assume that Herodotus reported incidents because he believed them historical or because he believed it his duty to repeat them in spite of serious doubt about their historicity. Sometimes his reader may not be sure for which reason Herodotus told a story. There is, however, one part of Book III of which no one will be unsure: the account of the debate of the seven Persian conspirators. This Herodotus

¹T. A. Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought (London, 1951) p. 36, says, "It is not inconceivable that such a debate should have taken place, but most of what we read in the passage cannot be a report of what Persian nobles said in 522 B.C., but a dialogue, composed some seventy years later, after the manner of fifth century Greek philosophers."

related because he believed that it happened,

"When the turmoil had quieted and five days had passed, those who had rebelled against the Magians took counsel over the general situation. There were given speeches at this time, which are incredible to certain of the Greeks, but they were given nevertheless."²

"When Mardonius had sailed from Asia and arrived in Ionia, he then, as I shall tell, did something very marvellous for those of the Greeks who do not believe that Otanes advanced the opinion to the seven Persians that Persia should be ruled democratically. For Mardonius put down all the tyrants of Ionia and established democracies in the cities."³

These two quotations, the one from the introduction to the speeches in Book III and the other from Book VI, indicate that Herodotus encountered disbelievers of his story but, that in spite of their disbelief he was convinced that the debate happened and he was not going to change his mind because of the criticism of others. That Herodotus felt obliged to remind us of his acceptance of his account may indicate something of the importance he attached to the event.

Since this was a discussion of the various solutions to a political crisis, their merits and demerits, and since, as I shall show, Herodotus had to reconstruct most or all of its content, this debate may be a most valuable indication of the political opinions of the historian.

²Herodotus III 80. 1.

³Herodotus VI 43. 3.

Of the seven conspirators only three, Otanes, Megabyzus, and Darius, spoke. Summaries of their arguments follow. First came Otanes, who argued for democracy. Public affairs should be placed in the hands of the Persians in general. The recent insolence (hybris) of Cambyses and then that of the Magian all go to prove that monarchy is not good enough any more. The best of men placed in a position of power upsets the traditional laws and customs. The unbridled insolence and envy of a king have miserable and degrading effects on his people. But the greatest evils are these: he disturbs the ancestral customs, takes women by force, and condemns men to death without trial. The rule of the people, however, has the finest of all names, Isonomia;⁴ offices are held by lot; an officer's accounts are scrutinized, and all plans are referred to the public assembly.⁵

Otanes was answered by Megabyzus. He agreed with the words of Otanes against monarchy, or tyranny as he calls it,⁶ but failed to concur with him on the subject of democracy. The mob is stupid, insolent (hybristic), and worthless, an insufferable alternative to monarchy. It cannot use any knowledge it may have in order to rule, for it has none. It governs like a

⁴On the meaning of Isonomia see Victor Ehrenberg, "The Origins of Democracy," Historia I (1950) pp. 514-548.

⁵Herodotus III 80. 2-7.

⁶The words for monarchy and tyranny, and monarch, tyrant, and king are interchangeable in Herodotus: see A. Andrewes, The Greek Tyrants (New York and Evanston, 1962) p. 27. For the institution Darius uses the word μουναρχίη, for the man μούναρχος; Megabyzus τυραννίς, and τύραννος; Otanes μουναρχίη, and τύραννος.

river in flood—with no restraint. Let us, therefore, choose the best of men and give them the power, keeping ourselves amongst them. For the best plans come from the best men.⁷

Darius concludes the debate in the following fashion. The argument is over the best of the three forms of government. On this basis, the finest government is monarchy. The most suitable man rules in the ablest way and keeps plans against the enemy silent. Oligarchy breeds enmities, which in turn breed strife and murder, and these disturbances give rise to monarchy.⁸ It is thus again shown that monarchy is best. In democracy there are bad practices, which lead to strong internal alliances that hold together until one man arises and stops such practices. This man wins the admiration of the people and so becomes a monarch. Thus it is demonstrated yet again that monarchy is the finest thing. "To sum up, whence came our freedom? Did it come from a democracy, an oligarchy, or a monarch? I hold the opinion that we were freed by one man. It is not good to destroy the established ancestral customs."⁹

Such were the three arguments according to Herodotus. Whether or not this debate is in any way historical, one thing is certain. Even if there was a debate in Persia at this time, all the actual words of each speaker would not

⁷Herodotus III 81.

⁸This argument is not without obscurity, perhaps intentionally so. Herodotus seems to mean that one man murders all his opposition until he emerges as sole ruler.

⁹Herodotus III 82.

have come down to Herodotus. As the historian himself presents the debate we are not led to think that they did, for he makes the event seem like a private and informal meeting of seven conspirators, in which it is hard to imagine a scribe nearby appointed to write down an account of proceedings, a sort of Hansard. Even if a "Hansard" were written and preserved there remains the question of translation. The Persian of the speakers has at some time become the Greek of Herodotus. Not only that, but the translation, if it took place, has been free. As Sinclair has said,¹⁰ the ideas, especially about democracy—the choice by lot, the scrutiny of accounts, the referral of everything to the public assembly—, sound more like Greek ideas from the fifth century than Persian from the sixth.

Again, if a detailed account came down to Herodotus or his source, it has been edited by one or the other. There were seven Persians but only three spoke, one for each form of government, and each with crisp succinctness. There are no wasted words or repetitions characteristic of informal debates among groups of men. These features suggest editing or that Herodotus did not have much of the content of the speeches from his source, and had to fall back on his own imagination to reconstruct the essence of what was said.

J. Wells has argued cogently that the Philhellene, Zopyrus, could have been the source Herodotus used for this debate. He reminds us that Zopyrus traced his descent through two generations to the Megabyzus of this incident. The genealogy of Zopyrus closes Book III, following the account of the bravery

¹⁰ Sinclair, Loc. cit.

and devotion of his grandfather, another Zopyrus. The many details of the heroism of the earlier Zopyrus in the siege of Babylon and the genealogy of the later Zopyrus suggest that Herodotus talked with his contemporary, whom he declares to have deserted from Persia to Athens.¹¹ Wells argues for the date 441 B.C. for this desertion.¹² Unfortunately he cannot be dogmatic about any part of his argument; his conclusions are well drawn, nonetheless, and could be right.

Wells' date of 441 for the desertion is the earliest that anyone has yet supported.¹³ If Herodotus received a reliable account of the debate, which took place in 522, no sooner than 441, then we have a time lapse of about eighty years or more between the event and its coming to the ears of Herodotus. If Zopyrus was the source, it is unlikely that he would have brought with him to Athens any written account of what was said, even if one existed. He would have to speak from memory either of what he had read about the debate, or, more likely, of what he had heard his family say about it. Probably his family had had little to say, for the argument of Megabyzus hardly flatters his intelligence, as I shall show, and seems more like the sort of speech Herodotus would give to a spokesman for oligarchy than the sort Zopyrus would give to his great-grandfather.

¹¹ Herodotus III 160.

¹² J. Wells, "The Persian Friends of Herodotus," *JHS* XXVII (1907) pp. 37-47. Zopyrus was the great-grandson of Megabyzus; see Herodotus III 153. 1, 160. 2.

¹³ How and Wells I, p. 302.

The following facts Herodotus might have ascertained from Zopyrus: Otanes was the hero of the conspiracy and out of it gained eternal freedom from the Persian king for himself and his family; Darius was naturally the advocate of monarchy; Megabyzus also spoke. The substance of the speeches, with helpful hints from Zopyrus, was probably the work of Herodotus. Otanes, who refused to be ruled by another man at the end of the debate,¹⁴ was credited with opening it by defending freedom or (here a Greek mind is at work) democracy. To Darius was allotted the victorious conclusion for monarchy. But Megabyzus also spoke, so he was given a speech for oligarchy to complete the discussion.

Since these speeches were composed mostly or entirely by Herodotus, we can extract from them something of his political thought, for it is when a historian is constructing an otherwise lost period of history that he reveals himself and his beliefs to his reader. When Herodotus set out to give a representation of the speeches as they were given, he was obliged to fill in details as he thought they happened. He would have put himself in the place of each speaker and asked himself, "What would I have said in order to win the argument?"¹⁵

¹⁴Herodotus III 83. 2.

¹⁵That Herodotus does use speeches to comment upon, and explain, his work, at least in Books V-IX, has been established by Lieselotte Solmsen, in two articles: "Speeches in Herodotus' Account of the Ionic Revolt," AJP LXIV (1943) pp. 194-207; "Speeches in Herodotus' Account of the Battle of Plataea," CP XXXIX (1944) pp. 241-253.

There is something to be gained from considering the context of the debate.¹⁶ If we reflect for a moment, we shall recall that we have just been given four descriptions of tyrants or monarchs in rapid succession. At the end of Book II and the beginning of Book III there is the picture of the mad Cambyses; immediately following comes the story of Polycrates of Samos; this introduces a brief account of some crimes of Periander of Corinth; and then we go back to Persia for Smerdis the usurper. Of these, two are murdered, one dies miserably without an heir, and the other dies suddenly and unexpectedly as the result of an accident. All four of them show disrespect for women in some way and all four either have serious trouble with some of their subjects or else are generally hated by them.

Cambyses murdered his brother without justification, after banishing him from Egypt out of envy,¹⁷ ignored the laws and customs of Persia by marrying two of his own sisters and then caused the death of one of them,¹⁸

¹⁶It is stressed by Solmsen in the above articles that the speeches must always be explained in their context. The discussion of mine that follows is a short version of the thoroughly developed statement by Gertrude Mary Hirst, Collected Classical Papers (Oxford, 1938) pp. 97-110.

¹⁷Herodotus III 30. 1.

¹⁸Herodotus III 31. 5. The legal advisers οὕτω οὕτε τὸν νόμον ἔλυσαν δείσαντες Καμβύσεα, ἵνα μὴ αὐτοὶ ἀπόλωνται τὸν νόμον περιστέλλοντες, παρεξεῦρον ἄλλον νόμον σύμμαχον τῷ θέλοντι γαμέειν ἀδελφείας. Truly the laws were not broken, but one senses that they were severely strained.

shot down the son of a Persian noble in cold blood,¹⁹ and would have killed his adviser Croesus.²⁰ He died as the result of an accidental wound.²¹

Polycrates treacherously sent aid to his "enemy" Cambyses who was preparing to invade the land of his "ally" Amasis. Not only that but he sent only those subjects from whom he feared revolt, and he sent them with a message insinuating that Cambyses could keep them—in other words, he attempted to banish them without trial.²² When they returned and fought for their native land, he shut up their women and children in the docks and would have burned them if need be.²³ He was brutally and treacherously murdered by a Persian.²⁴

Periander had murdered his wife Melissa, and so gained the hatred of his elder son Lycophron. Next Periander made war against his father-in-law Procles, who had told Lycophron about the murder. Later Lycophron himself was murdered in Corcyra. In revenge for this crime Periander took three hundred Corcyrean youths of the best houses and sent them to Lydia to be made into eunuchs.²⁵ As for Smerdis, while he was greatly mourned by the people of the Persian realm,²⁶ yet he committed the great crime against the Persians of sleeping with their noble women, although he himself was of base origin.²⁷ He was murdered by the seven conspirators.

¹⁹Herodotus III 35. 1-3.

²⁰Herodotus III 36.

²¹Herodotus III 64-66.

²²Herodotus III 44. 2.

²³Herodotus III 45. 4.

²⁴But this is not told us until after the debate, Herodotus III 126-128.

²⁵Herodotus III 48-53.

²⁶Herodotus III 62-63.

²⁷Herodotus III 69. 2.

Thus the debate of the seven is introduced by an account of the bloodshed and abuse characteristic of tyranny. The context after the debate is equally relevant. Immediately upon the establishment of Darius as king Herodotus presents the account of his arrangements for tribute (φόρος) throughout the Persian empire. By virtue of its position, Herodotus' account of these arrangements makes tribute appear as typical of tyrants and tyrannical empires.²⁸ Herodotus does not suggest that Darius' levies were oppressive, but he does record that Darius earned the name kapeios because he instituted them. This word, which seems to mean something like our "money-grubber," is not without a barb.

Next, almost as comic relief in what appears to be a relentless pursuit of tyranny, Herodotus presents his entertaining "wonders of the far East." When he has finished the "wonders," he returns to his main theme, giving an account of the death of Polycrates. Again we see the rashness of the tyrant, who threatens his daughter that he will force her to remain a spinster if she does not stop warning him about his coming death. By this time, however, we have learned from the debate to expect contempt of women from tyrants, and we are not surprised when Polycrates shuts his ears to his daughter's advice and goes to his death.²⁹

²⁸I shall later show that Herodotus did regard φόρος as typical of unjust and tyrannical rule.

²⁹Herodotus III 120-126.

On each side of his account of the rashness of Polycrates, an example of pedimental structure that reminds us of the theories of J. L. Myres,³⁰ Herodotus relates the murderings of two Persian nobles by Darius. The first man to die was Intaphrenes, who would have invaded the king's privacy while he was with a woman. When stopped by the servants of the king, Intaphrenes cut off their noses and ears. Darius, not so much troubled about the misfortune of his servants but suspecting Intaphrenes of rebellion, had him and his entire house with the exception of two males destroyed, apparently not caring that he had been one of the seven conspirators. There is no mention that he was allowed a trial.³¹ Next comes Oroetes. Although he may have deserved death because of his own homicides, he was certainly granted no trial but killed while still occupying the seat of his satrapy.³² Ironically, Intaphrenes' wish to invade the king's privacy would never have arisen had Intaphrenes and the other conspirators opposed the establishment of a monarchy in Persia. Moreover, Darius, acting as a typical monarch, broke the Persian law in killing both these men.

"I admire this law also (of the Persians), which forbids even the king himself to kill anyone. Nor can any other Persian maim one of his own

³⁰J. L. Myres, Herodotus Father of History (Oxford, 1953) pp. 60-88.

³¹Herodotus III 118-119.

³²Herodotus III 126-129.

servants. But, upon reckoning up, if he finds the misdeeds more and greater than the good services, then his rage takes its course."³³

But there was no "reckoning up" in the deaths of these two men.

Otanes, the advocate of democracy, received a character-sketch from Herodotus through a speech attributed to him that was delivered before the deposition of Smerdis. When Darius urged immediate action in order to overthrow Smerdis, Otanes answered him thus:

"Son of Hystaspes, you are of a noble father and seem yourself to be no worse than he. However, do not hasten this undertaking so rashly. Take it more cautiously; there must be more of us before we strike."³⁴

When Darius persisted, Otanes turned to the practical consideration of getting past the palace-guards.³⁵ He was not a man of inaction, for it was he who obtained the evidence that Smerdis was an illegitimate ruler and who initiated the conspiracy. He was, however, a cautious and practical man like Sandanis and Artabanus, both "wise advisers" in Herodotus.

With the above facts from Herodotus' history in mind and remembering that Herodotus ". . . does not obtrude his own opinions but he often lets his sympathies be seen,"³⁶ we are in a position to see real meaning in the

³³ Herodotus I 137. 1.

³⁴ Herodotus III 71. 3.

³⁵ Herodotus III 72. 1.

³⁶ Sinclair, p. 39.

words of the wise Otanes. If Otanes is wise to Herodotus, it is likely that his ideas will be those Herodotus thinks are wise, indeed, the very beliefs of the historian himself. To Otanes, tyranny is unbearable. The best of tyrants change the ancestral customs. They are envious and "hybristic" in depriving their subjects of their dignity and their rights. In the words of Otanes, "the greatest evils I am about to tell: he upsets the ancestral customs, he violates women, and he murders men without trial."³⁷ These are the three major charges that Herodotus, through Otanes, brings against tyrants, and all three could be made against the tyrants he has discussed in Book III, with the exception of Smerdis, who merely violated women. Herodotus appears to be stating here the opinion he has formed from his consideration of monarchy and tyranny in the rest of Book III. The effects that tyrannical actions have upon the subjects of an irresponsible ruler have been recounted in the preceding lines.

"Hybris enters him because of his present high standard of living, and envy was natural to man from creation. Having these two he has all evils. Puffed full of hybris he commits many outrages, and, full of envy, more. Although a man in a tyrant's position ought to be without envy, for he has everything he wants, he is by nature the exact opposite to this toward his citizens. For he is envious of the best of his citizens when they survive and live, and he rejoices in their greatest calamities. He himself is the best of men for hearing calumny. Of all men he is most inconsistent, for, when you respect him with moderation, he is furious because you do not worship him; and when you worship, he

³⁷Herodotus III 80. 5.

is furious because you are a fawner."³⁸

A tyrant destroys initiative and enterprise and so destroys his people. The inescapable conclusion is that Herodotus was a hater of tyranny.³⁹

Herodotus was also a lover of freedom, especially democracy, as Otanes' tightly condensed description of the advantages of democracy shows.

"First, the rule of the people has the finest name of all: Isonomia. Moreover, it performs none of the monarch's crimes; offices are gained by lot, an officer's accounts are scrutinized, and all plans are referred to the public assembly."⁴⁰

In short, everyone has a part in the government and, therefore, in working for the state he is working for himself. To use the words of Otanes, "the state and the people are synonymous terms."⁴¹ That is how Otanes concludes, and to Herodotus the most cogent argument has been put forward. History decreed, however, that these men were not to be swayed by the appeal for democracy, but by a specious argument for monarchy.

³⁸Herodotus III 80. 3-4.

³⁹A. D. Godley does not accept this idea; A. D. Godley, Herodotus, 4 vols. (Loeb Classical Library, London, 1928) Vol. III, p. xvi.

⁴⁰Herodotus III 80. 6.

⁴¹Herodotus III 80. 6, the translation is de Selincourt's: Herodotus, the Histories, translated by A. de Selincourt (Edinburgh, 1959).

After the speech of Otanes comes that of Megabyzus, which is a slander of democracy, but hardly an argument for oligarchy.⁴²

"Nothing is more stupid or 'hybristic' than a useless multitude. It is insufferable for men who have just escaped from the hybris of a tyrant to fall into the hybris of an unruly people. At least when a tyrant does something he knows what he is doing, but the people know nothing. How could an untaught man know anything, or one who knows nothing of what is right and fitting? He is accustomed to go crashing through his business without sense like a river in flood."⁴³

This heap of insults is not an argument. The implication of Herodotus appears to be that no convincing charge can be brought against democracy. Certainly there is very little that Herodotus, through Megabyzus, finds to say in favour of oligarchy. He merely employs an exhortation. "Let us choose a number of the best men and turn the power over to them."⁴⁴ Thus all that has been accomplished by Megabyzus is the calumination of democracy.

This violent rebuttal of democracy prepares us for the triumphant arguments of Darius. Otanes, a practical man, based his argument on observations

⁴²Herodotus does put bad arguments in the mouths of his speakers to achieve special effects: see Solmsen, "Ionic Revolt," pp. 198-200. That Megabyzus offers no real argument for oligarchy has already been observed by Victor Ehrenberg, "Origins of Democracy," p. 525.

⁴³Herodotus III 81. 1-2.

⁴⁴Herodotus III 81. 3. T. A. Sinclair calls his "naturally the best plans come from the best men" (III 81. 3) an argument. Yet it is more of a truism than an argument. It leaves us with the problem of finding the best men. Megabyzus assumes that the seven conspirators are among the best men. This assumption would not necessarily be convincing outside the seven conspirators.

from the common experience of all seven conspirators, and had discussed in practical terms the crisis in which the state was placed, for which situation he had offered what seemed to him a workable solution. To him kingship had proved itself to be an evil form of government, therefore it should be abolished. The alternative to monarchy fairest to the Persian people would be a form of democracy. Such was the recommendation of Otanes.

Darius' argument like Darius himself as Herodotus portrays him is deceitful. Before the debate, when the conspirators are discussing ways of stripping the Magian of his power, Darius urges immediate action and presses his point with these words:

"You ought really to have done this on your own initiative. Since, however, you thought it right to lay the matter before others and have brought it to me as well, either we act today, or know that no one will beat me in a race to the Magian to denounce you. I myself will tell him everything."⁴⁵

"For if a lie must be told, let it be told. We all seek the same thing telling lies or speaking the truth. One lies when he expects to gain something by deceitful persuasion, another tells the truth in order that benefit will accrue to him for his truthfulness and that more will be entrusted to him. Thus by different actions we seek the same thing. Were there nothing to be gained, the truthful would lie and the liar would speak truth indifferently."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Herodotus III 71. 5.

⁴⁶Herodotus III 72. 4.

When we come to the debate with the throne of the vast Persian empire at stake, we expect from Darius deceit and lies in his bid to achieve this prize.

There was deceit also in the way Darius acted to secure the throne when the debate was finished. He made his groom prepare his horse so that it would be the first to whinny at sunrise, the pre-arranged sign by which the Persians had agreed to appoint their next monarch.⁴⁷ This the groom did, and Darius won the throne. Deceit runs through the words and actions of Darius. Now let us turn to his argument in the debate.

He begins by undermining conclusions drawn from the practical situation. "We are discussing the best form of each government, the best democracy, oligarchy, monarchy."⁴⁸ Thus Otanes' argument from practical experience is made irrelevant despite its value. Otanes argued from facts, Darius announces that he is going to argue theory. Darius is free to make any rules he chooses so long as he himself adheres to them, which he fails to do. Nevertheless, he has brushed aside the powerful arguments of Otanes. How he proceeds with an appealing truism:

"What government can possibly be better than that of the very best man in the whole state? The counsels of such a man are like himself, and so he governs the mass of the people to their heart's content; while at the

⁴⁷Herodotus III 85-87.

⁴⁸Herodotus III 82. 1.

same time his measures against evil-doers are kept more secret than in other states."⁴⁹

His next postulate is equally impressive. "In oligarchy each man wishes to be foremost in having his opinions prevail. This situation breeds enmities, which breed murder. From murder the state progresses to monarchy. So it is shown how monarchy is the best."⁵⁰ Yet, even if we grant this process, it does not show how monarchy is best. If we allow the contention it shows only that monarchy is inevitable.⁵¹ What is most important here, however, is that Darius has departed from the principle that he laid down, namely, that the discussion was to be about the best form of each type of government. The oligarchy he used to prove his point was an evil one, full of strife. If he had kept to his rules and discussed the best oligarchy, presumably one composed of fair and honest men ruling the people well, the rest of his argument would have been impossible. Darius, the theorist, uses actual oligarchy to prove that theoretical monarchy is best. This is dishonest, but yet the very type of argument we were led by Herodotus to expect from him. His discussion of democracy is exactly parallel to that of oligarchy and requires no special treatment. His concluding statement drawn from the history of the Persians, illustrates that Darius was not unsympathetic to the cogency of the type of practical argument used by Otanes. Indeed, Darius makes ample use of the kind of argument he began by disqualifying. Yet in a way this last argument is the

⁴⁹The translation is that of George Rawlinson, Herodotus: History of the Greek and Persian War (New York, 1963) p. 148.

⁵⁰Herodotus III 82. 3.

⁵¹Ehrenberg, however, "Origins of Democracy," p. 528, considers this argument of Darius a cogent one.

most ridiculous of them all. "To sum it all up in a single statement, whence came freedom to us and who gave it? Did it come from a democracy, an oligarchy, or a monarch?"⁵² The answer he expects us to supply is obvious. If we are carried away by his rhetoric, we shall supply it without even wondering if it is correct to use the word freedom the way Darius does. But if we have been with Herodotus until now, we shall certainly hesitate before we agree that Cyrus freed the Persians in any way. Perhaps he spared them the degradation of subservience to the Medes, but they were still subservient to him. And surely the whole question that is being debated is whether or not the Persians will become free in the full political sense. Certainly Cyrus brought them closer to freedom. But Darius is begging the entire question when he suggests that Cyrus actually has given the Persians their freedom.

This speech of Darius has been noted by T. A. Sinclair as the beginning of Greek political science. About it he says:

"(Darius) does not expressly reply to the charge of ὄβρις made against tyranny, a charge which Megabyzus had laid against democracy, as many others did after him. But he was clearly aware that any government might behave in a 'hybristic' and tyrannical manner. For he is made to preface his statement with the proviso that in any discussion of the three forms demos, oligarchy, and monarchy, we must consider only the best in each case. This foreshadows the sixfold classifications of constitutions, three good of their kind and three deviations or bad forms, which is familiar to us from Plato onwards."⁵³

⁵²Herodotus III 82. 5.

⁵³Sinclair, p. 38.

Professor Sinclair does not say whether Darius argued well or not, but he does point out that the charge of hybris goes unanswered. To Herodotus this is an important charge for history itself substantiates it. The spokesman for democracy, of course, by virtue of his position as the first speaker, could not answer the charge of hybris against democracy. Darius, however, was in a better position. He spoke last and could answer any accusation previously made. Therefore, when he ignores the charge of hybris, we can only assume that Herodotus could provide him with no satisfactory answer.

The result of the last two speeches is that democracy remains slandered and the Persians allow themselves to be persuaded by deceitful, question-begging arguments that they can be free under a monarch. The vote is cast for monarchy. A monarch, the very kind of man who, in the belief of Herodotus, destroys the ancestral customs, was installed so as "not to destroy the good old ancestral customs."⁵⁴ On this note ringing with irony Herodotus finishes the debate.

Now that the choice is made, it remains for us to observe its consequences. Herodotus never forgets this debate. It is the scenic backdrop in front of which the whole of the rest of the history is acted.⁵⁵ If we still doubt what

⁵⁴Herodotus III 82. 5.

⁵⁵The theatrical imagery is suitable. What Herodotus has done in this account amounts to a dramatization. He began by sketching some of his characters, Otanes the wise and practical, Darius the deceitful; then he composed speeches to suit the characters. In this subtle way, Herodotus praises democracy and condemns tyranny in an incident in which tyranny emerged victorious. On dramatization in Herodotus see David Grene, "Herodotus: the Historian as Dramatist," The Journal of Philosophy LVIII (1961) pp. 477-488.

is the best form of government, let us watch democracy versus monarchy or tyranny during the invasion of Greece.

CHAPTER IV
THE IONIAN REVOLT

About 500 B.C., many Greeks of Asia Minor, most of whom had been brought under the control of the barbarian by Croesus, were persuaded to throw off the foreigners' yoke. By this time, however, Persian control of their area had become considerable. Some thirteen years before this time, Darius, after securing his rear by subduing Thrace and gaining complete control of the Chersonese and the Hellespont, had invaded Scythia. Although he failed to defeat the Scythians, he gained for Persia mastery of the north coast of the Aegean sea. Persia had also taken Paeonia by the time of the revolt, thus menacing Macedonia and, potentially, mainland Greece itself. Before the Scythian invasion, the Persians had begun to interfere with the affairs of the islanders in the Aegean when Syloson asked Darius for help in his attempt to establish himself as tyrant in Samos. Although the rest of the islands retained their independence, there was no doubt now that Persia was the dominant power in the Aegean. The situation was such, therefore, as to offer little hope to the Asiatic Greeks for the success of their revolt.

Their political situation promised these Greeks, mostly Ionians, little hope also. As early as Darius' invasion of Scythia, Herodotus tells us, when the first chance for revolt had been given the Ionians, they did not accept the opportunity for fear of the political unrest that prevailed in their cities. The incident is found in Book IV of Herodotus where Darius, after giving the Hellespont and Bosphorus to the Asiatic Greeks to guard, marched into Scythia.

The Scythians led Darius deep into their territory, then wheeled toward the Bosphorus and arrived before the Persians could double back. The Scythians at once offered the Ionians their freedom. All they had to do was break down the bridge over the Bosphorus and revolt, thus cutting off the Persians' retreat. The Scythians would have done the rest. This is how the Scythians ended their overtures to the Ionians.

"Since formerly you remained here out of fear, now break down the bridge and be off as quickly as possible, rejoicing as free men and thanking the gods and the Scythians."¹

Miltiades favoured the Scythian proposal;

" . . . but Histiaeus opposed it. He said that now each of them ruled his city as tyrant because of Darius. But with the power of Darius gone he himself would not be able to rule Miletus nor anybody else any other state. For each state would prefer to be ruled by a democracy rather than a tyranny. When Histiaeus had put forward this opinion, everyone changed his mind and adopted it, though he had formerly agreed with Miltiades."²

By reporting, or composing, this speech Herodotus makes it clear that he believed the decision not to revolt was a political one. It was not governed by considerations of strategy, for, strategically, the Ionians were in a position to give Darius serious trouble. Herodotus proves this by giving a list of the tyrants present at the meeting that made this decision.

¹Herodotus IV 136. 4.

²Herodotus IV 137. 2-3.

" . . . the tyrants of the Hellespont were Daphnis of Abydos, Hippoclus of Lampsacus, Herophantus of Parium, Metrodorus of Proconesus, Aristagoras of Cyzicus, and Ariston of Byzantium. These were from the Hellespont, while from Ionia were" ³

Herodotus mentions only five others at the meeting, showing that the meeting was dominated by Hellespontine tyrants. Miltiades does not appear in this list, but his name could be added, for he, like the Hellespontine tyrants, ruled an area that lay in the path of Darius' retreat. Herodotus repeats the word Hellespont in this list, reminding us of the advantage the Ionians could have gained over Darius by revolting. They could have cut off Darius' retreat completely, and, if they were given a Scythian victory to help them, liberation from the barbarian might have been within their grasp. They turned down this opportunity fearing deposition because of political dissatisfaction in their people. They needed Darius for survival.

The political situation of Ionia was no different when the overhasty Aristagoras came upon the scene. ⁴ Indeed, the Ionian revolt had its beginnings in a struggle with the rising popular party of Naxos. "Certain men of the rich class were exiled from Naxos by the demos, and in exile they fled to Miletus," ⁵ where they sought and obtained the dubious help of the tyrant Aristagoras, who had in mind to seize power in Naxos for himself instead of turning it over to the exiles. But Aristagoras realized that he would not be

³Herodotus IV 138.

⁴Solmsen, "Ionic Revolt," p. 201.

⁵Herodotus V 30. 1.

able to take Naxos without using Persian forces. Therefore, he went to Sardis and asked for the help of Artaphrenes, rashly promising to undertake the expenses of the campaign with the help of the Naxian exiles. At the start of the siege Aristagoras had a violent disagreement with the Persian commander Megabates who betrayed the purpose of Aristagoras to the Naxians. Consequently, the siege ended unsuccessfully with Aristagoras out of money and heavily in debt to the Persians. In financial desperation and urged on by Histiaeus, he decided to lead the Ionians in their premature revolt.⁶

In order to strengthen his cause, Aristagoras sought help from the Spartans. He could offer them no money; so he tried to lure them with the promise of easily obtained spoil. When they refused, he came to the Athenians. At this point Herodotus introduces a long history of the rise of Athenian democracy and its struggle for survival, at the end of which Aristagoras comes before the Athenian assembly and asks for help.

"When the Athenians had been persuaded they voted to send twenty ships to help the Ionians, appointing a general of theirs, Melanthius, an outstanding citizen in every respect. These ships were the beginning of troubles for Greek and foreigner alike."⁷

The history of the rise of Athenian democracy and its desperate struggle for

⁶Herodotus V 35.

⁷Herodotus V 97. 3. Twenty ships may not seem a significant contribution by Athens to a revolt against the Persian empire. It was a considerable one, however; see M. F. McGregor, "The Pro-Persian Party at Athens," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Supp. I (1940) pp. 80-83.

survival in the face of intervention by Sparta adds real meaning to these few words quoted above. As Herodotus tells the story, this was the first major decision that the young democracy had to make. It was a resolution to adopt a policy of hostility to the Persian empire, one that few could have believed to be without consequence. The history of Herodotus has as one of its tasks now to show how the Athenians faced the natural outcome of their stand against Persia and became equal partners with the Spartans in driving out the invader. By the careful arrangement of his material, therefore, Herodotus shows us that the "beginning of troubles for Greek and foreigner alike" was a political decision made in full democratic assembly by thirty thousand Athenians.⁸

Herodotus says that Aristagoras sought to strengthen his cause in another way, beside getting help from the mainland.

"He began by a pretence of abdicating his tyranny and establishing Isonomia in Miletus, so that the Milesians would follow him with a will. Afterwards he established the very same thing in the rest of Ionia, driving out some of the tyrants and turning over the others each to their cities of origin so as to establish friendships with the cities."⁹

The tyrants of Ionia depended upon Persia for support, in return for which they generally remained loyal to Persia.¹⁰ In order to raise revolt in Ionia,

⁸The number is Herodotus' own and comes from the context immediately preceding the above quotation. Herodotus V 97. 2.

⁹Herodotus V 37. 2.

¹⁰Page 44.

therefore, and in order to break down the alliances with Persia and at the same time to create friendships between the cities and himself, Aristagoras had to depose the tyrants. Aristagoras also pretended to abdicate from his tyranny and to establish Isonomia in Miletus "so that the Milesians would follow him with a will." This may or may not have been the motive of Aristagoras. There were no means by which Herodotus could have been sure of it, for Aristagoras died probably a decade before Herodotus was born.¹¹ The historian has either assumed it or accepted it without reserve from a source. In either case, the fact that he repeats it without qualification indicates that he did not doubt its validity. To him the establishment of Isonomia in Miletus meant that the Milesians would espouse the cause of Aristagoras and fight with a will, presumably out of gratitude. The same thing seems to be assumed for the rest of the Ionian cities. It appears that the populace of the cities, once they have gained Isonomia, can be expected to fight alongside their "liberators" for their freedom as staunch and willing allies. It is apparent, therefore, what faith Herodotus had in cities democratically governed.

In the mind of Herodotus the Ionian revolt was a foolish blunder undertaken by the Ionians upon the instigation of the rash tyrant, Aristagoras.¹² One reason why Herodotus judged Aristagoras to be so foolish was that the tyrant failed to appreciate the significance of the prevailing political unrest in Ionia.

¹¹ Aristagoras seems to have died before the battle of Lade and the end of the revolt. Herodotus V 126.

¹² Solmsen, "Ionic Revolt," p. 206.

The Ionian revolt failed, and Herodotus could show two political factors that helped explain its failure. The first was that Histiaeus, having come back from Susa to take over the revolt and so having brought with him some hope for its success, was unable to recover his tyranny in Miletus where he could have done the most damage to Persia. "The Milesians were happy to be rid of Aristagoras, and were in no way eager to accept another tyrant into their country inasmuch as they had had a taste of freedom."¹³ So, in his own case at least, Histiaeus was shown to be a true prophet:

"He said that now each of them ruled his city because of Darius. But, with the power of Darius gone, he himself would not be able to rule Miletus, nor anybody else any other state. For each city would prefer to be ruled by a democracy rather than a tyranny."¹⁴

Some of the cities, however, were willing to take their tyrants back after expelling them. This is the second political cause Herodotus gives for the collapse of the Ionian revolt.

"So reckoning they (the Persian commanders) called together the Ionian tyrants who had been expelled by Aristagoras of Miletus, had fled to the Medes, and happened to be there on the campaign against Miletus. Having called those of them who were present together, they spoke to them as follows: 'Ionians, now whoever of you who wishes the house of the king well, let him show it. Let each of you attempt to separate his own people from the rest of the alliance.'¹⁵

¹³Herodotus VI 5. 1.

¹⁴Herodotus IV 137. 3.

¹⁵Herodotus VI 9. 2-3.

The tyrants followed the recommendation of the Persians and made overtures to their peoples, offering to spare them from retribution if they separated themselves from the rest of the alliance and threatening to punish them brutally if they did not. Many Ionians obeyed the tyrants, seeing the power of Persia and the disunity in the Ionian camp. As a consequence the revolt was crushed at Lade.

Aristagoras had made a pretence of abdicating his tyranny and "He established Isonomia in Miletus. Next he established the very same thing in the rest of Ionia."¹⁶ Presumably, then, Herodotus saw the Ionian revolt as a group of democracies fighting against Persia. However, at Lade the Samians and many of the other Ionians did not even fight, but meekly returned home, taking back their tyrants and their Persian overlords. So told, the revolt proves that democracy is by no means the type of institution likely to produce heroic deeds in its participants. Herodotus, however, does not tell the story this way, a significant fact. He begins by showing the folly of Aristagoras at the start of the revolt. His mishandling of the siege of Naxos put him in the desperate position that drove him to consider revolt. When he decided, he tried to make the Spartans his allies, but made a rash speech in which he nearly persuaded the Spartans that they could march on, and take, Susa. However, his persuasive powers were working well until he made the blunder of telling the Spartans truthfully how far away Susa was. Herodotus believed that Aristagoras might have won the Spartan alliance but for this blunder.¹⁷ Later, when the Ionians

¹⁶Herodotus V 37.

¹⁷Herodotus V 50.

had suffered some defeats and their hopes were fading, Aristagoras, who was "not outstanding for his courage,"¹⁸ left them leaderless. Aristagoras, who only pretended to abdicate his tyranny, was still a tyrant in the eyes of Herodotus, and it was he whom the historian preferred to blame rather than the democracies of Ionia. Before the battle of Lade, Dionysius, the Phocaeen admiral, tried to assume leadership, but he worked the Ionians harder than a despot would have. He soon lost control, and Ionian discipline quickly vanished. Herodotus, it seems, seeks to excuse the Ionian democracies for their failure by blaming the tyrannical leaders of the revolt.

Herodotus believed that the only hope the Greeks had in opposing the Persians was their ability to develop free and stable constitutions. They did not have the vast steppes over which to retreat like the Scythians; nor could they hope to repeat the miracle the Massagetae had worked by defeating Cyrus, for at that time the Persian empire had not been organized on the same scale as it was when Xerxes led it against the Greeks. Although the constitutions of the Ionians had been free, they had not been stable, and were easily overthrown by the influence of the absent tyrants once the revolt had begun to go badly. Nevertheless, it remained a tribute to democracy that a tyrant could not get the Ionians to revolt without establishing that form of government in the cities of Ionia. Freedom with stability, however, was the antidote to the poison of Persia, a formula that had long been in the hands of the Spartans. Nonetheless, Sparta alone could hope for little against the whole Persian empire

¹⁸ Herodotus V 124.

now that Ionia was resubjugated. In the belief of Herodotus, as I shall show, it would take another state, Athens, who, unlike her Ionian friends, by establishing for herself a stable and free form of government, would start at Marathon a chain of victories that would lead to the liberation of Hellas.

CHAPTER V

THE TRIAL OF ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

In the narrative of Herodotus, Aristagoras went to Athens after failing to gain the help of the Spartans. But the narrative stops with Aristagoras about to ask the Athenians to help make war on Persia (thus committing themselves to a policy of hostility to the Persian empire) and digresses into an account of the expulsion of the Pisistratidae, the rise of Athenian democracy. "Driven off from Sparta, Aristagoras came to Athens, which had recently become free from tyrants in the following way."¹ This is how Herodotus introduces his account of the fall of the Pisistratidae. The words "free," "freed," and "free from tyrants" are found in various places throughout it.² Herodotus could not regard a people under a tyranny as free. He did not make the tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogiton the liberators of Athens.³ He related the murder of Hipparchus, but for him freedom did not begin for the Athenians until Hippias was on his way to Sigeum. The tyranny of the Pisistratids he regarded as not much different from any other tyranny. Aristotle and Thucydides told stories of the mildness and benevolence of Pisistratus and his son until the murder of Hipparchus, but Herodotus wrote very little on the subject.⁴ Again for Herodotus the expulsion of the

¹Herodotus V 55 1.

²Herodotus V 62. 1, 62. 2, 63. 1, 64. 2, 65. 5.

³Thucydides said (I. 20. 2) that many Athenians did consider Harmodius and Aristogiton the liberators of Athens.

⁴In I 59. 6 he simply says that they did not change the laws and ruled fairly and well.

Pisistratids was a step forward in Athens' advance to greatness. "Athens, a great city before this time, when rid of the tyrants, became even greater."⁵ Herodotus was not sympathetic to the Pisistratids.

After Hippias was driven out of Athens, there arose faction between Isagoras and Clisthenes. In his account of this struggle for power, Herodotus may have recalled the words of Darius in the debate in Book III. Darius had maintained that tyranny grew out of factions inherent in democracies.⁶ The history of Athens as Herodotus presents it, however, proved that the reverse could happen. In the case of Athens, democracy grew out of the factions that followed the expulsion of the tyrants.

Herodotus claimed that Athens rose to new heights as soon as the tyrants had been expelled. This was not entirely true, for Cleomenes entered Athens with a small force and all but established Isagoras in power. To have Sparta meddling in her internal affairs is hardly a sign that the city had increased in prestige. However, the greatness that came to Athens after the tyrants may be found in her demos. It was the council and the demos that drove out Cleomenes, making clear their choice of Clisthenes in preference to Isagoras. The Athenians chose Clisthenes because he offered them a substantial share in the government, which Herodotus recognized as democracy. Herodotus was clearly referring to the eventual emergence of democracy when he alluded to

⁵Herodotus V 66. 1.

⁶Herodotus III 82. 3-4.

the eminence of Athens upon the expulsion of the tyrants.

Herodotus describes Clisthenes' rise to political supremacy, but gives scanty details of his constitutional arrangements.⁷ This paucity of detail may tell us less about the interests of Herodotus than about the type of audience for which he wrote. He believed, perhaps, that a full account would have been tedious to an audience that was quite familiar with the workings of the Athenian constitution. Moreover, I shall show, in this context Herodotus, apparently with his mind on the impending Persian invasion, is less interested in democracy's advantages to the citizen than in its power against the alien. To the alien the details of the constitution matter little, its establishment is the important thing.

Of the establishment of democracy by Clisthenes there is no doubt in the account of Herodotus. "These men (Isagoras and Clisthenes) feuded over the authority. When he began to be worsted, Clisthenes made an alliance with the demos."⁸ "As he was in former time opposed to the demos, then, in every respect, he allied it to his cause."⁹ These quotations strongly suggest that Clisthenes improved the demos' position in the reforms. Otherwise it is hard to see why it remained his ally, for the friendship between the people of Athens and Clisthenes continued even while Clisthenes was in voluntary exile

⁷Herodotus V 65-69.

⁸Herodotus V 66. 2.

⁹Herodotus V 69. 2.

during the intrusion of Cleomenes to establish Isagoras.

"Nevertheless, afterwards Cleomenes came to Athens with a small force. When he arrived, he banished seven hundred families of the Athenians whom Isagoras singled out. This done, he next tried to abolish the council, and he turned over the offices to three hundred of the followers of Isagoras."¹⁰

It is safe to assume that the seven hundred families expelled by Isagoras and Cleomenes, if a true figure, represented the political allies of Clisthenes. With these gone, if the movement of Clisthenes had received only half-hearted support from the rest of the Athenians, we might have expected to hear nothing more of Clisthenes and his reforms.

"However, the council stubbornly resisted. So Cleomenes and Isagoras and his political associates seized the acropolis, while the rest of the Athenians of one accord besieged them for two days."¹¹

Eventually, "the Athenians recalled Clisthenes and the seven hundred families expelled by Cleomenes."¹² The people knew who were their friends even if the alignment with Clisthenes had sprung from the politician's self-interest, as

¹⁰ Herodotus V 72. 1.

¹¹ Herodotus V 72. 2.

¹² Herodotus V 73. 1.

Herodotus implies in the passages quoted above.¹³

The rest of the Athenians were willing to work "with one accord" in order to protect their pending constitution and to drive out the Lacedaemonian intruders.¹⁴ The Athenians had developed a sense of unity. There is no suggestion that this sense of unity came from the reforms of Clisthenes, nor does it matter. Otanes has already told us that the state and people are synonymous terms. Now this ideal is actually being realized in Athens, and a political force is arising with which one can not trifle. Cleomenes learned that he would no longer be able to come against Athens with a "small force." A king of Sparta discovered what an emerging democracy could do, and others were to be taught a similar lesson.

Cleomenes went back to Sparta in order to collect that large force that he would need to reduce Athens and make her conform to Spartan policy. As he came with his allies to the borders of Athens, an army from Boeotia and

¹³The self-interest of Clisthenes is implied strongly in V 66-69 also, where Herodotus alleges that Clisthenes of Athens was imitating his maternal grandfather, Clisthenes tyrant of Sicyon, in the reforms. Herodotus believed that the actions of a tyrant were selfish. So when he states that Clisthenes of Athens was imitating a tyrant in his reforms, he probably means that Clisthenes was acting from a selfish motive. In Book VI, however, his opinion of the Alcmeonidae is different: see C. Hignett, A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century (Oxford, 1956) pp. 148-151.

¹⁴As C. W. J. Eliot has shown in his work, "Coastal Demes of Attika," Phoenix, Supp. V (Toronto, 1962) pp. 145-147, on account of the considerable length of time needed to implement the reforms of Clisthenes, the "standing constitution" (Clisthenic democracy) existed at this time only on paper.

another from Euboea simultaneously invaded Athenian territory. With luck and their new-found pride, the Athenians turned potential disaster into glory for themselves. Luckily, the Spartan force disintegrated before it seriously penetrated Athenian territory. Then, with this threat out of the way, with unexpected audacity the Athenians met the armies from Euboea and Boeotia in turn and defeated them both on the same day.¹⁵ After relating these events, Herodotus makes his famous comment on democracy.

"So Athens grew; and it is clear not on any one consideration but on every that democracy is a desirable thing. When the Athenians were under the tyrants, they were in no wise better than their neighbours in war; but, when rid of the tyrants, they became foremost in battle. This too is clear, therefore, that, when they were ruled, they shirked their duty since they were working for a despot; but, when free, each individual was eager to press on with the task for himself."¹⁶

In this passage, the self-interest of individuals is taken for granted. This does not mean that Herodotus was a cynic, rather, that in his opinion a man works better and harder when he is working for himself. We already know from Book III that in democracy a man can at once work for himself and the state. "The state and the people are synonymous terms."¹⁷ To Herodotus this proves that democracy is a desirable thing. He has not finished there,

¹⁵ Herodotus V 74. 1 - 75. 3.

¹⁶ Herodotus V 78. Note the sustained interest in the power of democracy confronting alien peoples, in this case Euboea and Boeotia.

¹⁷ Herodotus III 80. 5. The translation is de Selincourt's.

however, he still has something very important to add. He seldom breaks into his narrative to pass a judgement in his own words. Usually, when he does, it is in disguised form through the speeches of the people in his history. No doubt he felt it essential to add that the change in constitution also had a direct effect on the way the Athenians fought in battle. With the Persian on the doorstep of Greece, we need scarcely doubt that it is not merely in fights with Boeotia and Euboea that he is warning us to expect evidence of valour from the Athenians.

Boeotia, wanting revenge for her humiliation at the hands of the Athenians, persuaded the Aeginetans to commence hostilities against Attica. This they did with relish, starting the much discussed "unheralded war."¹⁸ In the first attack the Athenians were badly worsted. Herodotus' narrative here appears to contradict his earlier statement that Athens was a great city now, thanks to her democracy. Surely if Athens was able to best the Boeotians and Chalcidians in a single day, she could have defeated the Aeginetans as well? There are two reasons why she was unable to handle Aegina. One was that the invasion was a surprise, an "unheralded" attack, for which the Athenians had made no preparations; the other was that Aegina was an island and a sea-power against which warships were needed, and the Athenians seemed to have had only a few. Athens did eventually undertake to build warships, but that had to be postponed at least until the new threat of Spartan intervention had passed.

¹⁸J. L. Myres, "ΑΚΗΡΥΚΤΟΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ," GR LVII (1943) pp. 66-67; A. Andrewes, "Athens and Aegina," BSA XXXVII (1936-1937) pp. 1-7.

For Sparta soon began to take further interest in Athenian affairs and desired a government in Athens more amenable to Spartan policies than democracy was proving.

Cleomenes, king of Sparta, summoned his allies to a conference, presented Hippias to them and announced his purpose. To him, the solution to the unmanageability of Athens was the restoration of tyranny there. Socles of Corinth opposed him, outlining the history of Corinth in such a way as to show to the assembly the evils of tyranny. The other representatives agreed with Socles that tyranny was an evil form of government to impose on a people, and voted against the move, thus quashing it. Hippias closed the round of talks with a bitter speech predicting trouble for the Corinthians now that they had agreed to leave democracy in Athens.

This situation is reminiscent of the one in Book III, where the seven Persian conspirators debated the best form of government for Persia. In both cases the political future of a major power involved in the Greco-Persian war was at stake, the decision was between democracy and tyranny, or monarchy, (the Persians giving some consideration to oligarchy) and tyranny was attacked through references to the actions of tyrants in history. The important difference is the point of view of the disputants. In Book III the seven Persians are debating their own future and that of their own people, weighing the relative advantages of the proposed constitutions for themselves as citizens; in Book VI the Lacedaemonians and their allies discuss the future

of another city, Athens, and the form of government most advantageous to themselves as outsiders. In these two debates, the reader of Herodotus is allowed to see the advantages and disadvantages of democracy and tyranny both to the citizen within the city walls and to the alien without, whether friend or foe.

What is of interest in this incident is the importance Herodotus seems to have attached to an event out of which nothing substantial grew. Sparta did not undertake the reform when she saw that her allies were against it. N. G. L. Hammond sees in this the trustworthiness of the Spartans in not acting without the full consent of their allies. Sparta, he tells us, was preparing to meet the Persian by uniting her allies around her in good faith.¹⁹ But it is possible that Herodotus saw something else in this. He told us not long ago that Cleomenes came to Athens with a small force and tried to establish Isagoras in power.²⁰ Now, however, Sparta will not move unless her allies are solidly behind her. Could not this be another measure of the new prestige of Athens? It seems to add weight to Herodotus' judgement of the increasing prestige of Athens now that she is a democracy.

This is how Herodotus opens the debate:

"When they (the Spartans) saw the Athenians growing in power and in no wise prepared to obey them, they perceived that while the Attic people were

¹⁹N. G. L. Hammond, A History of Greece to 322 B.C. (Oxford, 1963) p. 196.

²⁰Herodotus V 72. 1. His words are οὐ σὺν μεγάλῃ χειρὶ.

free they might become as powerful as themselves, but subdued under a tyrant they would become weak and tractable"21

Here Herodotus is probably imputing to the Spartans his own thinking. It may be doubted that he could have found out the real Spartan motive for recalling Hippias and for contemplating his restoration. Herodotus may have known that they considered intervention in Athens, but the stated motive is to some degree his own. What he considered worth reporting was an intention to undermine the strength of democratic Athens by installing a tyranny. In imputing this policy to the Spartans, Herodotus reveals to us his own belief, that a state under tyranny was weaker than under democracy.

The content of the speeches is of interest as well. For here, once again, Herodotus, if he has any definite information, can report as much or as little as he chooses, or, if he is improvising, he can improvise as much or as little as he likes, and make his speakers express the opinions he wants them to. The Spartans begin by complaining that their king has been roughly handled by the thankless Athenian demos, "which, having planted the seeds of glory, now makes them grow. So especially have learned their neighbours, the Boeotians and the Chalcidians. And soon someone else will find out for himself by mistake."²² The Spartans follow this with the recommendation for the reinstatement of Hippias.

²¹Herodotus V 91. 1.

²²Herodotus V 91. 2. The effect of democracy on the alien is still being studied. This is the kind of power that Hellas will need to oppose Persia.

Herodotus tells us that most of the allies were against the proposal but held their peace. Only Socles the Corinthian spoke against it.²³ The tyranny of Periander has already been used in Book III to illustrate the evils of tyranny in general. Now Periander and Cypselus are introduced to demonstrate the evils of tyranny to the Lacedaemonians and to show us, Herodotus' audience, what a dreadful thing tyranny can be and how fortunate the Athenians are to be rid of it. "Men will take up the habitation of fishes and fishes that of men when you, Lacedaemonians, destroy fair governments and prepare to establish tyrannies in the cities" ²⁴ Socles tells the Spartans that, if they think that tyranny is so good, they should have one themselves.

"At present, you yourselves, who have no knowledge of tyrants and who take fearsome precautions that such should never be in Sparta, hardly care a jot about your allies. But if you knew something about it as we do, you would have a better piece of advice to give than your present one."²⁵

Then Socles recalls the deposition of the Bacchiadae.

"And, when Cypselus became tyrant, this was the type of man he became: many of the Corinthians he banished, many he robbed of their wealth, and many more by far of their lives."²⁶

²³Herodotus V 92. 1.

²⁴Herodotus V 92 δ. 1.

²⁵Herodotus V 92 δ. 2.

²⁶Herodotus V 92 ε. 2.

Such is the summary of the reign of Cypselus. About the reign of Periander, the son of Cypselus, Socles has more to say.

"Now at the start, Periander was milder than his father, but when he began to correspond with Thrasybulus, tyrant of Miletus, he became even far more blood thirsty than Cypselus."²⁷

Periander enquired of Thrasybulus by messenger how he might establish himself safely and rule his city in the best way. The reply of Thrasybulus was to take the messenger out into the field and ask him questions instead of answering the question he was asked. All the while he cut off the finest and tallest ears of grain until nothing was left in the field worthy of note.

"Periander saw the point and understood that Thrasybulus was advising him to murder the foremost of his citizens. So from that time he worked every evil on his citizens. What Cypselus had left undone in murdering and banishing, Periander saw through; and in one day he stripped all the women of Corinth because of his own wife Melissa" [whom Periander is alleged to have murdered in Book III and with whose dead body he had sexual intercourse],²⁸

Periander emerges as an almost "perfect tyrant" according to the Herodotean definition of the word tyrant.

"But the greatest of evils I am coming to tell: he upsets the ancestral customs, he forces women, and murders men without trial."²⁹

²⁷Herodotus V 92 ζ. 1.

²⁸Herodotus V 92 η. 1-4.

²⁹Herodotus III 80. 5.

It is remarkable how well these three charges can be levied against Periander.

After Socles completes his account of the stripping of all the Corinthian women and the dealings of Periander with his wife, he concludes:

"There is tyranny for you, Lacedaemonians, and that is what it does. And we Corinthians were stunned to hear that you were recalling Hippias, and now that we have heard your speech we wonder all the more."³⁰

So the Corinthians cast a clear vote against the recalling of Hippias and the move is quashed.

To the words of Socles, Hippias gives a strange reply. Here, had Herodotus desired to give a fair chance to tyranny to speak for itself, he might have permitted Hippias to seize this opportunity for an account of the mildness and benevolence of the Pisistratidae themselves, and defend the tyranny of his own family in an attempt to win the votes of the allies. But the only answer that he makes is a back-handed compliment to democracy. "Surely the Corinthians more than all others will sorely miss the Pisistratidae when the appointed days come upon them from the Athenians."³¹ The days are "appointed" in the words of Hippias by the oracles with which he was familiar. If the oracles predict trouble, then trouble will come, but when it comes, it will make the Corinthians wish for the Pisistratidae instead of Athenian democracy. So even Hippias is allowing that democracy is more effective

³⁰Herodotus V 92 η. 4-5.

³¹Herodotus V 93. 1.

against the alien than tyranny.

Athens remained a democracy and Hippias went back to Sigeum. At this point Herodotus comes back to the Ionian revolt and the question is put to the Athenians in full assembly: "Will they aid the Ionians in revolt against Persia?" The answer is yes. We need not wonder what the answer would have been had the proposal of the Spartans been carried out. To Herodotus, this was a turning point in the history of the development of resistance to the oncoming Persian. Now, even though the deposition of the Athenian democracy had not been undertaken, it had been debated and rejected, so that, for better or for worse, Athens was and would remain a democracy. As a democracy she would have to meet the Persian. The outcome would prove either the worth or the folly of her constitution. The die was cast.

One of the first noteworthy decisions this newly established democracy made was to help the Ionians in their revolt against Persia. It was a momentous decision, for it meant that Persian reprisal had to be expected in the event of the collapse of the revolt. The revolt collapsed. Reprisal came. It was at Marathon, as Herodotus would have it, that democracy proved its worth forever.

With the failure of the Ionian revolt, the Persians were free to move against the mainland and silence it for the future in case of more trouble in Ionia. They began operations by attacking Eretria and landing at

Marathon, where, as Miltiades informed Callimachus, there was a decision about to be made. "It is in your hands, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens or make her free and leave behind a memorial for all mankind greater than that of Harmodius and Aristogiton."³² The allusion to Harmodius and Aristogiton is fitting. They helped Athens on the road to deliverance from tyranny. Callimachus was in a position to put the finishing touches to what they began. If he followed the best strategy, he could deliver Athens from tyranny and "she is able to become the foremost city of Hellas."³³

The strategy advanced was that of Miltiades, and it turned out to be the best, for the Persians were defeated decisively. Miltiades was one of those prominent aristocrats whom Thrasybulus would have cut down like a fine ear of grain in a wheat field. His father Cimon had been banished, recalled by Pisistratus, and then killed probably at the order of Pisistratus' sons.³⁴ Now he was in Athens a fugitive from the Chersonese and was allowed to help in the formation of strategy. The benefit that Athens received from him was immeasurable. The idea of giving such men as Miltiades a voice in the formation of strategy against an enemy is in diametric opposition to one of the ideals of Darius in his argument for monarchy. A monarch, according to Darius, keeps plans against the enemy silent.³⁵ The battle of Marathon,

³²Herodotus VI 109. 3.

³³loc. cit.

³⁴Herodotus VI 103.

³⁵The enemy (δυσμενέας ἄνδρας) is translated "evil-doers" by Rawlinson (p. 148), whose translation I followed on pages 38-39. Powell's lexicon gives "hostile men."

however, is proof that there is an advantage in discussing plans openly in the way a democracy would do. It makes it possible for the best plan to come forward.

Darius stated with obvious truth that the rule of the one best man is best. Herodotus might have agreed. Such a statement is not a solution to any problem, however. Indeed, it raises the problem how shall we be sure that the best man will come forward and take control. To Herodotus, Marathon proved that the system that enables a talented man to come forward in a crisis and guide his state through it is democracy, not monarchy, where the king wins his position by birth not necessarily by merit.

As Herodotus presents his material he shows that the political situations of the combatants were already shaping the outcome of the struggle. Persia was a monarchy, as the seven conspirators elected to make her, Athens a democracy because of the initiative of the council and the demos and thanks to the efforts of the demagogue Clisthenes. Sparta had her special form of freedom, which she had gained by the wisdom of Lycurgus and preserved by her own. Now her eunomia was to stand the test at Thermopylae.

CHAPTER VI

THERMOPYLAE - A WIN FOR PERSIA

A VICTORY FOR SPARTA

Just as Marathon at the end of Book VI served as the justification of the Athenian constitution, so Thermopylae at the end of Book VII, following as it does a discussion of Spartan politics, is presented by Herodotus as justification of the Spartan constitution. In Book VII the "laws" of Lycurgus are the underlying cause Herodotus gives for the discomfort of the mighty invader of Hellas.

Book VII begins with the dispute for the Persian throne that immediately preceded the death of Darius. Demaratus, the exiled Spartan king, is introduced as one of those who played a major part in the resolution of the controversy. Xerxes is proclaimed successor and, almost immediately, Darius dies.¹ Xerxes must now choose between the two unfinished tasks inherited from his father: the re-subjugation of Egypt, and the invasion of Greece. After considering various arguments for each proposition, Xerxes elects to do what he must do: set in order his own empire by silencing Egypt before trying to add new territory.²

After the re-subjugation of Egypt, the question of the invasion of Greece naturally comes once again to the fore. Speeches are given in a council of

¹Herodotus VII 1-3.

²Herodotus VII 4-8.

the Persian court and arguments both for and against the expedition are presented in turn by Mardonius and Artabanus. By means of the speech of Mardonius, Herodotus makes it obvious what he thought were the Persian motives for the invasion of Greece: basically, the Persian empire must not cease expanding and Athens must be punished.³ Mardonius' speech is very similar to the speeches made by Aristagoras when he tried to persuade the Persians that they should strike at Naxos and later the Lacedaemonians that they should invade Persia. Both Mardonius and Aristagoras tried to convince their listeners that the campaigns they were advocating would be incredibly easy and that victory would be theirs by simply arriving at the enemy's doorstep with a large force.⁴ One gathers from Herodotus that Mardonius was, like Aristagoras, offering foolish advice, and one expects disaster for a campaign undertaken on these terms.

Mardonius is followed by Artabanus, who describes like a true prophet the strategic difficulties that were actually encountered in the invasion of Greece and warns against taking it too lightly. Artabanus sees many chances for defeat, the greatest of which is the possibility of a naval reverse that will result in the cutting off of the Persian infantry.⁵ He therefore advises the king that, if he should disregard his advice and insist upon undertaking

³Herodotus VII 9. 1 - β. 1.

⁴Herodotus VII 9 β. 2 - γ. Artabanus' speeches are in V 31. 3, 49. 3-4.

⁵This comment reveals that Herodotus understood the over-all strategy of the invasion and the defence.

the invasion, he at least should stay at home and not risk his own life.⁶ Xerxes, though at first angry with Artabanus, is nevertheless put by him into a state of indecision.⁷ Indeed, he seems about to renounce the invasion. Then he has a dream.⁸

The dream visits Xerxes twice and the second time confronts him with these words:

"So, son of Darius, you seem to have renounced the expedition in the council of the Persians, and have treated my words as of no account, as though you heard them from nobody. Now understand this well: unless you march straightway you can expect the following from your actions. Just as meteoric as has been your rise to power, so sudden will be your disappearance."⁹

The dream does not promise Xerxes anything if he undertakes the campaign. It merely tells him something that he probably feared without the dream: his rise to power has been sudden because, as we have been told very recently, there are other sons of Darius older than Xerxes who thought that they should have been king before Xerxes and who may be prepared to snatch the throne from an idle monarch unless they are given something to keep their minds and hands occupied.¹⁰ The dream alludes explicitly to the precarious state in which

⁶Herodotus VII 10 0. 1.

⁷Herodotus VII 11. 1, 12. 1.

⁸Herodotus VII 12. 1-2, 14.

⁹Herodotus VII 14.

¹⁰Herodotus VII 2. 2.

Xerxes was placed upon his accession.

After his dream Xerxes is persuaded to invade Greece. But let us be on guard against merely seeing divine intervention as cause in history once more. The dream makes it clear that there is political or dynastic pressure compelling Xerxes to invade Greece. We are reminded of the statement of the wise Artabanus: dreams "are not of god"¹¹ but are "the cares of the day"¹² intruding into one's sleep. Whether this was equally the view of Herodotus concerning dreams, we cannot say.¹³ Herodotus may have argued that, if the dream was from a god, then the god was merely telling Xerxes that his precarious position was forcing him to undertake the invasion. But he may also have believed that Xerxes could have realized, and probably did realize, this fact without the god.

To Herodotus, therefore, the deciding factor that made Persia move against Greece was Xerxes' fear for the throne. The reasoned arguments for and against the invasion were balanced and resulted in indecision on the part of the king. But, as soon as he realized his precarious dynastic position, he acted. It is almost tautological that one has such dynastic problems

¹¹Herodotus VII 16. β. 2. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ταῦτά ἐστι . . . θεῖα.

¹²Herodotus VII 16. β. 2. τὰ τις ἡμέρης φροντίζει.

¹³Artabanus seemed to be sincere in his desire to disprove that Xerxes had seen anything real (VII 17. 1). Yet, despite his scepticism, Artabanus did see a dream.

only where one has a monarchic form of government. Thus the decision to invade Greece, in the eyes of Herodotus, was made by a monarch, not because he was a man, a husband, or a warrior, but solely because he was a monarch.

In Book I we discovered that Sparta came to a state of eunomia through the wisdom of Lycurgus, in Book V, that Athens became a democracy by a form of political evolution, and in Book III, that Persia, after debating certain other forms of government, elected to remain a monarchy. Fittingly, it is in terms of this last decision that Herodotus chooses to find the cause of subsequent Persian actions. The die was cast in Book III, not by the gods, but by men in cool debate. Persian monarchy is now to be pitted against Spartan eunomia and Athenian democracy.

Xerxes decides to invade Greece, and so advances toward his first test, Thermopylae. At Sardis the land forces muster, whence they advance to the Hellespont and cross it, proceeding along the coast with the fleet offshore advancing in conjunction. Then Herodotus presents a description of the nature and magnitude of the forces by land and sea.¹⁴ Finally, after we have been over-awed by the scale of this huge force and have had sufficient time to wonder how it was that the Hellenes ever managed to pluck up enough courage to face all these Persians, let alone defeat them, Herodotus raises that very question himself.

¹⁴Herodotus VII 61-100.

"When he had reviewed the fleet and disembarked from the vessel, he sent for Demaratus the son of Ariston, who was marching with him on the expedition to Hellas, and calling him in he asked him this: 'Demaratus, it is my pleasure to ask you something that occurs to me. Tell me now, if the Greeks will stand their ground and raise their hands against me. I do not think they will. Even if the Greeks and all the other men to the West were gathered together, they would not be able to endure my advance, being so heavily out-numbered.'"¹⁵

This question is one thing in the mind of Xerxes, but in the mind of Herodotus it becomes another: how was it that Sparta (the question is addressed to a Spartan) had the courage not to capitulate, but to lead Hellas against all of Asia and win?

The words used by Demaratus in reply have a familiar ring:

"Poverty is Hellas' old bed-fellow, but valour is her new-found friend, which she has got by work, wisdom, and strict law. Using valour, Hellas wards off poverty and despotism."¹⁶

In these words of Demaratus, we are strongly reminded of the very words Herodotus used to describe the reforms of Lycurgus and their effect on the Spartan people. "Work and wisdom" remind us of old Liches, who showed Sparta the way to leadership in the Peloponnesus, while "strict law" reminds us of the transition the Spartans made from kakonomia to eunomia through the

¹⁵Herodotus VII 101.

¹⁶Herodotus VII 102. 1.

reforms of Lycurgus. We are now told that these conditions specifically lead to greatness and freedom from despotism. But in this context "freedom from despotism" does not mean just freedom from some local Greek tyrant. With the potential enslaver of Greece actually present to hear these words the statement is akin to a prophecy that Hellas will meet and ward off the threat of slavery from the Persian invader. Here we have the discovery of historical cause in the political institutions of the Spartan people.

Demaratus continues and tells Xerxes bluntly that the Spartans will fight him even if all the rest of Greece capitulates.¹⁷ Xerxes laughs and returns to his old arguments about the vastness of his own forces compared to the smallness of those of the Greeks. He suggests to Demaratus that, if the situation (τὸ πολιτικόν) is such as he has described in Sparta, and if one Spartan is a match for ten of his men, then he, as a king, entitled to double portions of everything else, ought to be willing to fight against about twenty of his Persians.¹⁸

"Come now and look at it reasonably. How could a thousand, even ten thousand, even fifty thousand men, all being equally free and not ruled by any one man, oppose such a great army? For, if they were ruled by a single man after our fashion, they might become braver than is their usual habit out of fear of him, and might advance, driven by the whip, against greater numbers than their own. But, abandoned to freedom, they would do nothing like that."¹⁹

¹⁷Herodotus VII 102. 2-3.

¹⁸Herodotus VII 103. 1-2.

¹⁹Herodotus VII 103. 3-4.

Demaratus answers the first part of Xerxes' argument by saying that he would rather not have to fight anybody.²⁰

"But if there were need or some great cause driving me, I should gladly fight with any one of those men who claim to be a match for three Greeks. So also with the Lacedaemonians, they are inferior to none in single combat, but together they are the best in the world. Yes, they are free, but not entirely free. For over them there is a despot, nomos. This they fear far more than your men do you. What this master commands, they do. And his command never varies, he allows them to flee from no number of men in battle, but orders them to stay in their ranks and conquer or die."²¹

Unless the Spartans had obedience to law, eunomia, this argument of Demaratus would be meaningless, an impossible claim. The assertions of Demaratus are intelligible because the reader understands them in the light of the discussion of Spartan reforms in Book I.

Xerxes advances from Doriscus, and sends messengers to parts of Greece demanding the tokens of submission, earth and water. No messengers are sent to Athens and Sparta, however, because of the way these two cities treated the earlier messengers of Darius: the Athenians threw theirs into a pit, the Spartans theirs down a well. The Spartan people had acted tyrannically, condemning two men to death without trial, and violating the established

²⁰Herodotus VII 104. 3.

²¹Herodotus VII 104. 3-5.

customs with regard to the sanctity of ambassadors from another country. Things began to go badly for Sparta thereafter, which would have been no surprise to Herodotus. So the Spartans, recognizing their guilt, called for two volunteers to come forward and die for their state. It was to restore the fortunes, and save the freedom, of Sparta that two nobles, Sperchias and Bulis, offered themselves to go and die at the hands of the great king.²²

The proud words of these two Spartans, placed out of chronological order and with the Persians advancing towards Thermopylae as an unnatural background, provide further comment on the difference between the relative positions of a private Persian citizen and two private Spartan citizens. Hydarnes, the Persian, who became the commander of the "immortals" at Thermopylae, asks the Spartans why they do not reject their unhappy mission and simply make friends with the king and enjoy life in Persia.²³ The answer he is given is not only an answer to his question but also a reflection on the nature of the conflict at Thermopylae, an assertion of the willingness of free people to die for their freedom.

"Hydarnes, the advice that you give us is unbalanced. You advise us out of knowledge of one half, and from ignorance of the other. You know what it is to be a slave but you have had no experience of freedom, whether it is or is not a sweet thing. If you knew what it was, you would not advise us to fight for it with spears alone, but with axes as well."²⁴

²² Herodotus VII 131-136.

²³ Herodotus VII 135. 1-2.

²⁴ Herodotus VII 135. 3.

These may or may not have been the words of two Spartans addressed to Hydarnes in Persia, probably they were not, but they are certainly the words of Herodotus explaining why the Spartans will fight Hydarnes and the Persians at Thermopylae, at Plataea, and will eventually lead Greece to victory over superior numbers. Here Xerxes is answered. It is not a human despot who will lead the Greeks to success, it is freedom. People stand their ground in battle when they are free not because they fear the whips behind them but because they have before them an idea of the sweetness of freedom. In Book V Herodotus has already told us that he thinks people under a tyrant shirk their duty in battle.²⁵ We therefore now know what to expect from both sides at Thermopylae. From the Greeks we shall expect outstanding courage even to the death, from the Persians reluctance and cowardice.

There is a discordant note, however, in the remarks of Demaratus. Herodotus has made Demaratus show how the Spartans are ruled by their nomos. But this nomos has also been called a despotes.²⁶ What does Herodotus mean by this? T. A. Sinclair notes the introduction of this word and places beside it a similar point made in Book III:

"Perhaps Nomos was really now becoming a despotic ruler with all the uncertainty and fickleness of the traditional τύραννος. At any rate Herodotus has another tale to tell which, like the story of Demaratus, ends with the emphasis on νόμος, but the point of the story is quite different. The following is a translation of most of the passage: it

²⁵Herodotus V. 78.

²⁶See page 76.

keeps the word νόμος where it occurs and makes no attempt to reproduce in English the interplay of νόμος and νομίζειν . 'If one were to offer to all men the choice of the best nomoi in the world, they would all, after a good look around, choose their own There are indications that men do in fact adopt this attitude towards nomoi. This story will serve for one: King Darius during his reign summoned Greeks who were present at his court and asked them for what sum of money they would agree to eat their fathers at death. They replied that they would not do so on any account. Darius after that summoned members of a tribe of Indians who do eat their parents and asked them in the presence of the Greeks, who followed what was said through an interpreter, what sum of money they would take to consume their fathers with fire. They cried out in horror at the very mention of such a thing. Both these are practices established by Nomos (νενομίσται.) and I think Pindar was quite right in that poem in which he said that Nomos was king of all."²⁷

Thus, according to the observations of Herodotus, nomos could be, and usually was, a basileus or a despotes of a people, and we have been told that the Spartans themselves were under this despot, nomos. In spite of this, Herodotus has shown us quite clearly that he regards the Spartans as a free people. The story of Sperchias and Bulis has shown this. So it seems that we are led to some sort of paradox. How can the Spartans be under a form of despotism and yet be free at the same time?

The solution to the paradox was given to us in Book VI in a typical Herodotean 'digression' on the history of the Spartan kingship. We are first told there that the Spartans have two kings, and various accounts of how this

²⁷Sinclair, p. 40

came about are presented. Next comes a list of the prerogatives of the Spartan kings: they have certain priesthoods and absolute power in declaring war; they are allowed a body-guard and positions of honour at feasts, where they are served first and are given double portions; they have other incidental duties and privileges. Theirs are the oracles to keep, a duty they share with the "Pythians," theirs are certain civil disputes to judge; they each have one vote in the council of thirty elders,²⁸ which vote can be recorded in absentia through a near relative; and, finally, a special state of mourning is declared at their death.²⁹

Herodotus then turns to some past Spartan kings and their doings. One king, Ariston, had married twice without issue and suddenly began to cast lustful eyes on the wife of his best friend, Agetus. So he tricked Agetus by means of an oath into parting with his wife; and taking her he divorced³⁰ his own. From his second wife there was issue, Demaratus, but because of the confused marital circumstances there seemed to be some doubt over whose son Demaratus really was. Later, when Demaratus became king of Sparta, he fell out with Cleomenes, who then raked up the question of the birth of Demaratus and with the help of Leotychides hailed the king into court. At length he managed to get him deposed. Demaratus had already incurred the

²⁸ On this and Thucydides I 20. 3 see How and Wells II p. 87.

²⁹ Herodotus VII 51-60.

³⁰ Herodotus VII 63. 1. The word is ἀποεμψάμενος. Compare this action with that of Periander, who, as some believed, murdered his wife.

hatred of Leotychides by carrying off the latter's bride-to-be and marrying her himself. After asking the truth about his birth from his mother and getting either a skilfully non-committal answer or else what amounted to an admission of genuine ignorance on her part, Demaratus left Sparta for good.³¹

Leotychides, however, was not to have everything his own way. He too had to face judgement in court, after he was discovered sitting on a glove full of money that he had received as a bribe. He was found guilty and deposed. Like Leotychides, Cleomenes also had his share of trouble because of his conspiring with the priestess of the Delphic oracle in order to depose Demaratus, for, when the Spartans asked the oracle if Demaratus should be deposed, Cleomenes intrigued with the Delphic priestess to insure that she would condemn Demaratus. For this, Cleomenes was found guilty and exiled. So he went into Arcadia³² and began to stir up the Arcadians against his ex-countrymen. In fear of these actions the Spartans recalled and re-established him as king in full standing. Having returned home, Cleomenes went and was finally put in the stocks, where he died.³³ There had been one trial, however, that Cleomenes won. When he invaded the Argolid and brought Argos to her knees but came back without actually taking the city, he was tried on the accusation that he had taken a bribe to spare the city. This charge he escaped.³⁴

³¹Herodotus VII 62-70.

³²Herodotus (VI 74. 1) says that he first went to Thessaly. But this is unlikely. An emendation of the text is suggested by Daphne Hereward, "Herodotus vi. 74," CP XLVI (1951) p. 146.

³³Herodotus VII 71-75. 1.

³⁴Herodotus VII 76-82.

Absolute tyrants, we have been told by Herodotus, change the ancestral customs, take women by force, and condemn men to death without trial. The history of Spartan kingship, however, shows only a few examples of questionable dealings with women, quite modest acts beside those of Periander, who murdered his wife and stripped all the women of Corinth naked in one day; the ancestral customs were never changed after Lycurgus, indeed, they were rigidly kept, so much so that a number of kings lost their positions because they had either broken the law or, as in the case of Demaratus, did not fulfill all the legal requirements to be king. The kings, therefore, were as much under the law as any other Spartan citizen, the only difference between them and ordinary Spartans being their special privileges, which were clearly defined. Finally, of course, they did not condemn men to death without trial. This means that the "despot," or "king," of Sparta was not the man who bore the title, but law, nomos. Nomos ruled the king as well as the Spartans. This is what Demaratus meant when he said that nomos was despotes of Sparta. He was warning us not to assume that the "constitutional monarchs" of Sparta were in any way tyrants like Xerxes.

The rule of nomos could, and should, be tempered. We have seen in many places throughout the history of Herodotus that nomoi are very easily changed. Usually, Herodotus leaves us with the impression that such impermanence is one of the evils of tyranny. But what would he have said about free people changing their laws? It is worthy of note that there are only two peoples spoken of as free in the history of Herodotus, the Spartans and the Athenians.

It is also worthy of note that Herodotus shows how both these peoples made changes in their nomoi. This is significant. Herodotus is the relentless critic of tyranny. He seems to search for it everywhere and to warn his contemporaries about the pitfalls of the institutions of his time. I have already argued that for him freedom entails the absence of tyranny; now it is possible to go further. Freedom is a kind of balance between the people's control over their nomoi and their nomoi's control over them, for it is when the people have demonstrated their ultimate superiority over their nomoi that the absolute nature of the nomoi's control is broken. Only then, although the people may still be entirely submissive to their nomoi, can they be called free. Nomos is and must be master. But the people must show that they are the ultimate masters of their master. Thus Spartan freedom and the will to resist Persia all began with wise Lycurgus, who, we may remember, when he was considering the changes in Spartan law, was addressed in this way by the Delphic oracle: "I do not know if I am prophesying to a god or a man, more likely, I think, to a god, Lycurgus."³⁵ Herodotus must have concurred in this tribute to the greatness of the father of Spartan eunomia.

Demaratus saw the source of Spartan valour in their political institutions. Xerxes, on the other hand, suggested that the Greeks might derive valour from being flogged into battle by a master, but he could not see how

³⁵Herodotus I 65. 3.

their being free would help them in standing their ground before him. The reader of Herodotus will recall a story that disproves Xerxes' contention about the value of whips to inspire courage in fighting men. Perhaps Herodotus recorded this story in Book IV because, in proving that whips actually destroy courage in battle, it anticipated the futile policies of the great king in the battle of Thermopylae.

"(The Scythians) entered the country in pursuit of the Cimmerians, and, on their return home after the long gap of twenty-eight years, found trouble waiting for them hardly less serious than their struggle with the Medes. This was in the shape of a large hostile army, which opposed their entrance; for the Scythian women, wearied with their menfolk's protracted absence, had intermarried with the slaves.

* * *

"From the union of these slaves with the women of Scythia a new generation had grown to manhood, and when they learned the circumstances of their birth they resolved to oppose the return of the army from Media. As a preliminary measure of defence they dug a broad trench from the Tauric mountains to the widest part of lake Maeotis; then, taking up defensive positions along it, resisted all efforts to force an entrance. Many engagements were fought, but the invading army could make no headway until one of their number thought of a new plan of attack. 'My friends,' he said, 'what we are doing is absurd. In this war with our own slaves we stand to lose both ways, by the casualties we inflict no less than by the casualties we suffer; for the more we kill of them, the fewer we shall have, when we are once again their masters. I propose, therefore, that we should stop using spears and bows and go for them each one of us with a horsewhip. When they saw us armed, they naturally thought that they were as good men as we are, and were meeting us on equal terms; but when they see us coming with whips instead, they will never try to stand up to us.'

"The Scythians put the plan into action with immediate success; the opposing army was dumbfounded; every man forgot he was a soldier and fled."³⁶

We need not ask if this story contains any historical truth. The people of Herodotus' time who kept this story alive, even if they did not believe in its historical truth, at least preserved it because they believed in the potential truth of its lesson. A slave is no match for a free man in battle. But treat him as a free man and fight with him on equal terms and he is as good as any.

Herodotus makes one general remark about the value of Xerxes' men at Thermopylae: "They made it clear to anyone and especially to the king himself that in his army were many bodies (ἄνθρωποι) but few men (ἄνδρες)."³⁷ Xerxes also discovered the value of whips at Thermopylae. He found that free men would stand their ground without being flogged into battle, for on the third day, when his own men were reluctant to face the fierce-fighting Greeks, he resorted to driving his army into combat with whips.³⁸ So much for his suggestion that beating men like animals or slaves could make them any more manly in battle.

The last scene on the field of Thermopylae is simply sketched in these words:

³⁶ Herodotus IV 1. 2-3, 3-4. 1. The translation is de Selincourt's.

³⁷ Herodotus VII 210. 2.

³⁸ Herodotus VII 223. 3.

"So saying Xerxes went touring amongst the bodies. And, having heard that Leonidas was basileus and general of the Lacedaemonians, he gave orders to cut off his head and fix it on a stake."³⁹

This is a scene of poignant contrast. The victorious king in the battle of Thermopylae was not Xerxes but Leonidas. The humiliation that the body of Leonidas had to suffer only adds to his stature as a great man; at the same time it detracts from the "winner," Xerxes. The contrast between these two men is heightened by the fact that both carried the same title, basileus. Yet one was king of an enslaved people while the other's people were free.

³⁹Herodotus VII 283. 1.

CHAPTER VII
THE EPILOGUE
OF HERODOTUS' HISTORY

After Thermopylae, Herodotus takes us through Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale, showing us how the slave army of the great self-indulgent king of Persia was defeated by a few determined, proud, and "free" Greeks. He concludes his account of the war at the Hellespont, where the invader first crossed into Europe and so beyond what was his due, only to meet defeat for his insolence. As Herodotus approaches his conclusion, the Greeks win at Mycale, press on to the Hellespont, only to be left there by Herodotus, who turns to what seems to be another digression into the sometimes rather morbid private life of the great king. Finally, when he has described some of the gory details of the aftermath of one of the king's love affairs, he remembers his narrative for a moment and tells us how the Greeks regained the Hellespont. Its capture, however, reminds him of another depressing story about the violent Persian satrap Artayctes. Artayctes plundered the shrine of Protesilaus and then added insult to injury by taking certain women within the temple and having intercourse with them. But Artayctes had an ancestor—and this prompts Herodotus to tell another story, which presumably happened in the reign of Cyrus. Herodotus is spending more time in recounting illustrative material than in pressing his narrative directly to a specific goal. Is there a reason for this?

Immediately after the Persian defeat at Salamis, Mardonius urged Xerxes

not to give up but either to undertake an assault on the Peloponnese or else to leave him (Mardonius) behind with some picked troops, who would reduce the stubborn Greeks to slavery.¹ Xerxes then turned to one of his proven wise advisers, Artemisia, and asked her what she thought of these two suggestions of Mardonius. She recommended the second proposal on the ground that Mardonius was merely a slave of the great king and he would be leading a slave army. The king's slaves are his property, her argument goes. So whatever they possess already, or win in the future, be it money, spoil, or glory, it is not really theirs but the king's.² Whether or not we believe that Artemisia of Halicarnassus said this, we need scarcely doubt that it is what Herodotus of Halicarnassus believed. At Plataea, Mardonius and his men would be slaves fighting for nothing, they would shirk their duty in the field, and they would lose.

From this general description of the situation of Mardonius and his rank and file before Plataea, the historian advanced to a description of the state of mind of Mardonius' officers not long before the battle. Herodotus had heard a story from Thersander of Orchomenus, who received from the historian a character-reference that is probably included in order to reflect the truth of the story. Not long before Plataea, Mardonius and fifty of his officers were invited to a banquet at the home of Attaginus, the Theban. During the banquet, a Persian officer confided in Thersander in the following manner.

¹Herodotus VIII 100. 4-5.

²Herodotus VIII 102. 2-3.

"Do you see these Persians dining here and the army that we left encamped on the river? In a little while you will see but a few of this host surviving."³

The Persian was asked by the Greek why he did nothing to avert the disaster that he foresaw. Here is the answer:

"Friend, what has to happen from god man is incapable of averting. For who wants to listen, when all you tell is the truth? Many Persians are aware of these facts, but they follow along because they are bound by compulsion. The height of bitterness for a man is to be a thinker in much but a master in nothing."⁴

The pessimism of the man resulting from his position as a "slave" in spite of his high rank, is obvious and needs no further comment. Herodotus is analysing where the blame lay for the Persian defeat. Having started with a general statement about the whole of Mardonius' force he has now narrowed his attention to the officers of the Persian army.

The time came soon enough for the Persians to fight and lose at Plataea. In addition, according to Herodotus, they fought and lost Mycale on the same day.⁵ It is the sequel to the battle of Mycale that interests us for the moment. During the march back to Sardis, Masistes, the son of Darius, accused the general in charge of the Persians at Mycale, Artayntes, of being "worse

³Herodotus IX 16. 3.

⁴Herodotus IX 4-5.

⁵Herodotus IX 100.

than a woman for such generalship."⁶ We do not know if Herodotus endorsed this charge, but he certainly made no attempt to gainsay it. Whether the charge was valid or not, Herodotus has now passed from the rank and file of the Persian army to an officer and now to the generals, casting aspersions on their competence.

From the supreme commanders the next step is obvious. While the soldiers were going out to fight at Plataea without any hope of gaining anything for themselves, while the Persian officers were contemplating the battle in pessimism and downright despair, and while the Persians were being led by generals whose leadership could not escape serious (even if unjustified) reproach, where was the king of Persia? The usual place for the Persian monarch was Susa, his capital. In fact, however, he was much closer to Greece than Susa, in Sardis to be exact,⁷ while his army's morale was thus deteriorating. But what was he doing, if anything, to alleviate these problems? No one who has read the history carefully can escape the meaning of the following words: "He (Xerxes) being in Sardis at that time fell in love with the wife of Masistes" [the son of Darius and half brother of Xerxes].⁸ The story is not told just because it is interesting, but because it is a comment both on Xerxes in particular and on tyranny in general. The details of the ensuing story need not concern us. But, we may add, the end

⁶Herodotus IX 107. 1.

⁷Herodotus IX 107. 3.

⁸Herodotus IX 108. 1.

was disaster for Masistes and his entire house, who were, as we might conjecture, put to death without trial.⁹

From this Herodotus digresses back, we might say, to his narrative, which in itself is of only secondary interest to him now.¹⁰ The capture of the Hellespont brings Herodotus to Artayctes, the Persian governor (presumably the satrap) of the area.¹¹ Here is another example of the tyranny and misrule likely to ensue from Persian domination. Artayctes had robbed the shrine of Protesilaus of its treasure¹² and regularly had intercourse with women inside it.¹³ The rapacity and self-indulgence of the Persian king could be a model for his satraps. Herodotus, however, knows a story about an ancestor of Artayctes, which shows that it was not ever thus with the Persian empire. For when the Persians wanted to go down to the plains and take the fields of their now subjugated peoples who dwelt there, and to till the meadows in ease instead of trying to eke out an existence from the harsh and rugged hill country, they were dissuaded by Cyrus on the ground that the action would lead to softness and ultimate slavery.¹⁴ That those

⁹Herodotus IX 113. 2.

¹⁰In a manner of speaking the narrative was never of primary concern to Herodotus, who did not revel in merely telling stories as some believe. Herodotus was keenly aware of the "lessons of history," which were always of prime importance to him.

¹¹Herodotus (IX 116. 1) says: ἔτυράννευε δὲ τούτου τοῦ νομοῦ Ἐέρξῃω ὕπαρχος Ἀρταύκτης.

¹²Herodotus IX 116. 1.

¹³Herodotus IX 116. 3.

¹⁴Herodotus IX 122.

days were gone now the two preceding anecdotes, if not the whole preceding history, has shown. And, apparently, this self-denial on the part of the Persians is, to Herodotus, one of the reasons for their past successes. As we have already seen from the speech of Sandanis in Book I, the harshness of the Persian surroundings was one of the great causes of Cyrus' victory over Croesus. Thus Herodotus has brought us to what he considers to be one of the great underlying reasons for the expansion of Persia, and hence for the war between the Persians and the Greeks.

Myres has argued that Herodotus finds the underlying cause of the Greco-Persian war in this passage. He states confidently in his last paragraph that the choice made by the Persians and revealed in the very last few lines in the history of Herodotus is a direct fulfilment of the promise he made at the start: that the cause or reason, why they fought with one another will be discovered.¹⁵

Myres' belief that Herodotus wrote his last paragraph with his first one in mind is largely based on his theory of pedimental composition. In fact, however, we do not need Myres' theory to assume that Herodotus made this connection deliberately.

In the epilogue Herodotus returns to the time of Cyrus and Croesus and, in the reference to Protesilaus, to the time of the Trojan war as well;

¹⁵J. L. Myres, Herodotus: Father of History (Oxford, 1953) p. 300.

the history began with Croesus and Cyrus after a brief discussion of the Trojan war and certain other details that preceded that event. The theme of the abuse of women is concluded in the story of the amorous adventures of Xerxes with the wife of Masistes. This theme, beginning in the introduction, where Herodotus says that certain Persian logioi blamed the Greeks for the war because in the field of woman-snatching the Greeks were far more guilty than the barbarians—even starting the Trojan war over a woman—, spans the whole work of Herodotus. Not long after these stories of woman-snatching, the abuse of women and their rights began to be a special characteristic of kings and tyrants from the time of Gyges and his adventures with the wife of Candaules down to Xerxes. Moreover, in the epilogue Herodotus returns specifically to the threadbare contention of the Persians that the Greeks had incurred guilt when they invaded Troy and thus were to blame for the war. Herodotus re-introduces it and discards it a second time in order to pave the way for his final pronouncement on the subject.

Artayctes wanted to take possession of the treasure in the shrine of Protesilaus, who led the Greeks ashore at Troy and died in the process.

"Speaking in the following way he persuaded Xerxes: 'My lord, in these parts there is the house of a Greek man who invaded your land and died justly as a consequence. Give me his house, so that people may learn never to invade your land.' He said this because he could easily persuade Xerxes, who suspected nothing of what he really intended, to give him a man's house. And this is how he reasoned that Protesilaus had invaded the

king's land: the Persians consider that all Asia belongs to them and to whichever of their kings is reigning."¹⁶

The last sentence shows how thin the argument is that the Persians had suffered injustice at the hands of the Greeks in the Trojan war. To Herodotus, Artayctes was using a lying and deceitful argument to persuade Xerxes to grant what was neither Artayctes' due nor Xerxes' possession. In the introduction the argument that the Greco-Persian war began at Troy is merely brought forward and discarded. Now it is put into the mouth of a treacherous man and thus branded as worthless. Herodotus is still satisfied that the injustices began with Croesus.

The theme of the abuse of women is re-introduced to illustrate finally the misrule and tyranny of Persia. The tendency of the tyranny of Xerxes to degrade his subordinates is proved in the cowardice of Oecobazus¹⁷ and the rapacity of Artayctes. The theme of the effects of environment upon a people is at the last specifically related to the Persians and their role in history. The closing scene of the work is in Persia, the enslaver of the large part of the ancient world in Herodotus' eyes. The presence of the enslaver probably evokes the very last word of the history, δουλεύειν, to serve another man as a slave, a suitable word for the "historian of Greek freedom," as Herbert J. Muller has called Herodotus,¹⁸ to place at the end

¹⁶Herodotus IX 116. 3.

¹⁷Herodotus IX 118. 1.

¹⁸Herbert J. Muller, Freedom in the Ancient World (New York, 1964) p. 223.

of his history. Herodotus concluded his study of the Greco-Persian war in this way to show the Greeks the value of freedom and the horrors of tyranny and enslavement.

CHAPTER VIII

HERODOTUS' SYSTEM OF POLITICAL CAUSE

The purposes of Herodotus stated at the outset of his story were to save the great deeds of Greek and barbarian from obliteration by time," and especially to show for what αἰτίη they fought with one another."¹ The first of these has been amply fulfilled. He has shown how the Persians grew in a few generations from an insignificant tribe of unorganized people in the Median empire into the rulers of all but the entire civilized world. He has described many of the legal, political, artistic, and architectural achievements of both Greek and barbarian, and he has shown both how these civilizations came into conflict, and how the Greeks won their stunning victory.

But what of his promise to give the aitie of the war? Here we must establish the meaning of the word aitie before making assessment. The first and most obvious meaning in Herodotus is "blame."² In this sense it is used over and over again, and in the introduction "blame" is at least part of the connotation, for Herodotus immediately takes up the Persian conviction that the Greeks are to blame for the war. The latter he discards in order to

¹Herodotus I 1.

²See A. E. Wardman, "Herodotus on the Cause of the Greco-Persian Wars," AJP LXXII (1961) pp. 134-138, and Henry R. Immerwahr, "Historical Causation in Herodotus," TAPA LXXXVII (1956) pp.

substitute his own theory, namely, that Croesus began the real injustices by reducing some Greeks to the status of tax-payers within his empire. Thus the blame, in the view of Herodotus, is to be given to Croesus.

In most cases, however, Herodotus seems to use the word in an ambiguous context, where it is hard to tell exactly what he means. Indeed, there are passages where it is impossible, or at least difficult, to insist upon anything like blame, or guilt, or charge, and we are forced to seek a more neutral translation such as cause. The cognate adjective of aitie is used in Book II (12. 2-4), where Herodotus explains why the Persian skulls on a battlefield were thin and the Egyptian skulls thick. The people told him that the reason (aition) was that the Egyptians shaved their heads. This shaving of heads, he continues, is the reason (aition) why the Egyptians do not become bald. In the same passage the word is used similarly twice more. Again, in Book II (26. 1) the sun is aitios for the sinking of the Nile's level in winter. It is futile to argue that the sun is "to blame" here. Later in Book II (108. 3) Herodotus tells us that Egypt was no longer fit for horses and wheeled traffic after the reign of Sesostris. For this situation the many canals that Sesostris dug are aitiai. In Book VII (125) the adjective is used as a neuter noun, with the article. After Herodotus has told us that some lions had attacked the camels alone of all the pack-animals in the baggage train of the Persians, he wonders at the reason (to aition) for this strange selectiveness of the lions.

As for the word aitie itself, there are examples in which it seems to

have a meaning similar to the substantival adjective. Powell in his Lexicon to Herodotus declares that the word means "reason why" twenty-two times in Herodotus, but there is a suggestion of "charge, fault, or blame" in most of these. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions in Book III. The first is to be found in III 118. 2. Here Intaphrenes has just brutally mistreated the guards of the royal palace because they tried to keep him out on the perfectly true and justifiable ground that the king was with a woman. Intaphrenes replies with swift savageness.³ The guards then show themselves to Darius and tell him the aitie of their sufferings. Immediately Darius begins to fear another rebellion against the throne of Persia. Surely the point of the narrative is that no blame is to be attached to the guards for what they have done? If the guards were in any way to blame for what happened, presumably Darius would simply have told them that they had got what they deserved, and he may have thought nothing more about the matter. According to the story, however, Darius became anxious because his palace guards had been attacked suddenly and without provocation. Furthermore, if the guards had been in any way to blame for what happened, we should not expect them to go straight to the king. What then is the aitie responsible for their sufferings? It is simply that in the course of doing their duty they had stopped a quick-tempered Persian nobleman from entering to see the king at a moment when he had no right to do so. And

³Intaphrenes was one of the seven conspirators. They had agreed that any one of them could see the king at any time he chose except when the king was with a woman (III 84. 2).

this is the cause, or reason, for their mutilation; it is not the charge for which they were mutilated. The word is used in the same way again only a few paragraphs later (120. 1). Here a man who has never had the slightest thing to do with Polycrates of Samos resolves to kill him "for the following aitie." The man has no charge or grudge to bring against Polycrates. As the story goes, he decided to kill him because of a quarrel with another Persian noble. So, we might say, the cause of, or the reason for, the death of Polycrates was the quarrel between two Persian nobles. It is true that at the end of the chapter we are told that the murderer of Polycrates wanted revenge, but not on Polycrates directly, only indirectly, because he was the source of the man's reproach. Perhaps our best example, however, is to be found in Book VI (3. 3). When Histiaeus is asked by the Ionians why he has urged Aristagoras to revolt, Histiaeus makes up a ridiculous story to satisfy their curiosity but suppresses the real aitie. Now it happens that Herodotus has already told us why Histiaeus wanted Aristagoras to revolt: he believed that, if there was a revolt, he, Histiaeus, would be sent to the coast of Asia Minor to deal with it. He wanted Aristagoras to revolt because he did not like Susa, where the king had taken him, and wanted to get home to Miletus.⁴ The aitie, or reason, was that Histiaeus wished to return to his Milesian tyranny. Here the idea of grudge, charge, or blame is totally absent.

⁴Herodotus V 35. 4.

Thus Herodotus can mean simply "cause" by the word aitie. In addition, the word, even though it be restricted in other contexts, should have the widest meaning in the introduction, where the historian is speaking in broad and general terms about the plan and purpose of his work as a whole. When Herodotus says that he is going to find the aitie that caused them to fight with one another, we must assume that he is going to find out both who was to blame for the war and the reason why they fought with one another. Has he done both these things?

Certainly he has shown us quite directly that he blames Croesus, the beginner of injustices against the Greeks, for the war; but what about the reason for their fighting one another? Throughout this study I have suggested how Herodotus has done this. Through the words of Demaratus and through his own praises of democracy he has shown us why the Greeks, especially the Spartans and Athenians, were willing to fight, even against apparently hopeless odds. But why did the Persians fight with the Greeks? It is not enough to say that it was because Athens sent twenty ships to help in the Ionian revolt, although it is certain that Herodotus did think of the twenty ships as one of the major aitiai of the war. We could, perhaps, find many other such incidents, small and great, that would have collectively given Persia a hearty grudge against the Greeks. But grudges are only pretexts. We have seen in the early part of Book VII that Xerxes could still be persuaded by Artabanus not to invade Greece in spite of the many "injustices" that Persia had to avenge. We have also noted, however, that within the Persian monarchic

system there were forces driving the king to a policy of foreign conquest. Here we are much nearer to the idea of an underlying cause. There was the problem of securing one's succession to the throne by keeping pretenders too busy to think of plot and intrigue. Earlier than Xerxes, Darius' wife was aware of this need for conquest. She it was who urged Darius to undertake a campaign, preferably the invasion of Greece.⁵ Nevertheless, the Persian drive to expand, for which the doctrine of revenge was merely a justifying pretext, was even older than Darius. Herodotus does not tell us that Cambyses was aware of it, but he does say that Cambyses invaded Egypt because he was displeased with the wife that Pharaoh had sent him.⁶ Yet, as Herodotus may well have recognized, this is hardly a reason for a foreign conquest and barely qualifies as a good pretext.⁷ We need not doubt that Herodotus was aware that this sort of "pretext-making" was characteristic of empires. He himself knew that Croesus had done this very thing when taking over the Greek states of Asia Minor. "Croesus," he says, "laid hands on all the Greek states one at a time . . . bringing one charge against one state, another against another. Against some he could find serious charges

⁵Herodotus III 134.

⁶Herodotus III 1.

⁷How and Wells I p. 256, "The personal motive is characteristic of Herodotus; the alliance of Egypt with Lydia (I 77) and mere lust for conquest (I 153. 4) were fully sufficient causes for the attack on Egypt." But surely the incident shows how hard pressed the Persians were at times to justify their "lust for conquest," their doctrine of expansion.

and he acted accordingly; but against others he only brought trifles."⁸ Where did the Persian doctrine of expansion begin? Perhaps, in the eyes of Herodotus, the Persians learned it from the Lydians or the Babylonians along with the drinking of wine.⁹ Certainly, as Sandanis told Croesus long ago, it had its roots in the rugged conditions that surrounded the Persians in the time of Cyrus. Because of their environment, they were able to defeat the Lydians and thus make the first substantial addition to their empire (of which Herodotus had knowledge) after they had supplanted the Medes. From this time on Cyrus was a conqueror. First he took Babylon and later he died fighting the Massagetae.

Thus Herodotus thought that the doctrine of expansion was a heritage from the age of Cyrus, springing from the superiority the Persians had gained from being tough farmers of the hill country. When Herodotus comes to the end of his work he associates this toughness with the Persian belief in their right to rule other men. Cyrus tells the Persians that, if they keep their environment, they will rule other men; if they renounce it, they will become slaves. Herodotus concludes with the comment: "So the Persians agreed and went off home, acknowledging that Cyrus' opinion was better; and they chose to inhabit an infertile country and to rule rather than to till the plains and be to other men slaves."¹⁰ When confronted with the advice of

⁸Herodotus I 26. 3.

⁹When Sandanis spoke to Croesus, the Persians drank only water (I 71. 2-3), but at the end of Book I (207. 6-7) they knew about drinking wine.

¹⁰Herodotus IX 122. 4.

Cyrus, the Persians chose to take the course that would make them rulers of men. From this choice would have grown their belief that they had a right to rule other men, a belief that would have easily led to the growth of their doctrine of expansion.

However, there is more we could and should notice about this decision, which as I shall show, was made upon the suggestion of an untyrannical king. Once it was endorsed by the Persians it became, in the eyes of Herodotus, an untyrannical move, in that the subject peoples of the Persian empire would be able to see that their rulers did not think excessively of themselves and of their own indulgence. Instead of plundering temples, as Artayctes was to do, or snatching men's wives, like Xerxes, they agreed not to seize farms and rule in comfort, but to leave others with their possessions and rule amid the hardships of the hill country. Herodotus apparently believed that the Persian empire, when it began, lacked all the outward signs of harsh tyranny.

Yet to Herodotus the great king and his subordinates were tyrants to the fullest extent of his definition by the time of the Persian invasion of Greece. How was the transition made from mild monarchic rule to unbridled tyranny? Surely it came after the seven Persian conspirators debated and agreed to retain the monarchy, even when Otanes had warned them like a true prophet that evil would come of it. And evil did come of it. Darius immediately set about ordering the assessment and collection of tribute, a symptom of the presence of a form of tyranny. This is how Herodotus outlines the transition:

"Under Cyrus and even under Cambyses there was nothing laid down concerning the payment of tribute; instead the people brought gifts. And on account of this establishment of tribute and for many other similar arrangements the Persians say that Darius was a money-grubber, Cambyses a despot, and Cyrus a father. For Darius turned everything into money, Cambyses was harsh and tyrannical, while Cyrus arranged everything for their benefit."¹¹

Thus the rule of the empire descended from the paternal, or providing, rule of Cyrus through the harsh reign of Cambyses to the money-making tyranny of Darius, and was itself proof of the general principle that Otanes had put forward, that even the best of men placed in a position of absolute power cannot help becoming tyrants sooner or later. To be sure, the decline was gradual in the case of Persia; it happened nonetheless.

I have suggested that tribute (phoros) was a symptom of tyranny to Herodotus. He seems to betray the same attitude to it in two other places. In the first instance Herodotus speaks of the way in which the Scythians ruled Asia "hybristically and tyrannically." One of the marks of this kind of misrule was the random exaction of phoros,¹² but here, it might be argued, Herodotus may not have been objecting to the exaction of tribute so much as its haphazard manner. A more convincing example is to be found in the opening pages of the history. In I 5, Herodotus announces that he is going to tell us who it was who began the injustices against the Greeks. Immediately

¹¹Herodotus III 89. 3.

¹²Herodotus I 106. 1.

thereafter, he tells us that Croesus "was the first of the barbarians of whom we have knowledge to reduce certain of the Greeks to the payment of phoros." Thus the exaction of tribute by Croesus was one of the injustices that started the war. In the case of Persia the assessment of phoros is typical of the change from the mildness of Cyrus, who refused to take away the rich fields of Persia's subjects, to the harshness of Xerxes, who took everything he could, their money, the prime of their man-power for slaves, even their due glory for heroic deeds in battle.

In the introduction to this study I wondered how Herodotus would have explained the military success of Persia, since the empire was a form of tyranny; why did he not see that the success of Persia over her enemies was disproof of his theory that freedom, not tyranny, was the cause of military prowess in a state? I have shown that the rugged environment of the Persians was one explanation. Now, however, we are introduced to another consideration. Under Cyrus, when Persia expanded more than at any later time, Persian control over her subjects was not described by the historian as harshly tyrannical, but noticeably mild. Cyrus and Cambyses received gifts, but Darius and his successors collected phoros.

Cyrus emerges as a mild despot in the description of his dealings with some of his subjects in the closing scene of the history. The Persians went to Cyrus on the suggestion of Artembares and proposed removing to better and more congenial surroundings. Cyrus granted the request in spite of the fact

that he believed it to be the wrong thing to do. Only after granting the request did he try to argue with the Persians.¹³ It seems from this incident that Cyrus was not the typical tyrant at all. Had he been, he would have either laid down the law as he saw fit, or, more likely, leapt at the opportunity for a life of ease and luxury. Again, Herodotus made Darius conclude his argument for tyranny by suggesting that the Persians owed their "freedom" to Cyrus. Herodotus would never have accepted this statement as true; nevertheless, he could believe that some Persians, who had "no knowledge of freedom, how sweet a thing it is, " to use the words of Sperchias and Bulis speaking to Hydarnes, would accept the assertion of Darius. Herodotus clearly believed that the Persians looked back to a golden age of mild monarchy in the age of Cyrus.

It was in the reign of Cyrus also that the Persian empire was founded. The Persians defeated the Medes and took over the rule of their empire, next fell the Lydian empire, followed by the Babylonian. Soon after these events, in the reign of Cambyses, Egypt capitulated to Persia, and the task of conquering the civilised world looked all but complete. But in the reign of Darius things did not go so well. Darius invaded Scythia without conquering it, and was even defeated in an exploratory expedition to Marathon. The real shock, however, was yet to come. Xerxes mobilized vast forces from the whole Persian empire for an invasion against a few city-states in Greece.

¹³Herodotus IX 122.

The city-states won decisively. It will be noted I have omitted the Persian defeat at the hands of the Massagetae. This too is interesting. Before the battle with the Massagetae, Cyrus announced to Hystaspes that he, Cyrus, was favoured by the gods. Again, we remember the trick the Persians set for the Massagetae by preparing a sumptuous feast for them complete with neat wine to overpower them. Signs of tyranny, Cyrus' unjustified self-importance (he was not favoured by the gods for he fell the next day in the fighting), and the self-indulgence of the Persians, are present, contributing to the Persian disaster. Again, however, there is an illustrative contrast. The picture of Cyrus dying in battle against the Massagetae may evoke a picture of Xerxes sitting on a specially prepared seat and watching the battle of Salamis. Perhaps the Persians could have felt themselves near-equals to their warrior king in the days of Cyrus, but Xerxes left no doubt about his assumed superiority.

An obvious pattern emerges from Herodotus' study of the Persian empire. The more tyranny it had, the less success it had in war. The reverse had been the case in Herodotus' account of Athens' history. To him, while the Athenians were under the tyrants they were not much more successful in war than their neighbours, but, after Athens won democracy, she became a major power in Hellas. The same pattern is found in his account of Sparta; Lycurgus gave the Spartans their eunomia, by which word he probably meant the rule of law or obedience to law as opposed to the rule of kings or obedience to them. From the time of the establishment of this eunomia Sparta

began to increase in power. Both Athenian democracy and Spartan eunomia were free constitutions as opposed to tyrannies. So to Herodotus there was a direct relationship between the amount of freedom enjoyed by the citizens and the amount of power enjoyed by the city. As tyranny grew, the power waned; as freedom grew, the power increased. The reason for this is that men are self-interested. Their self-interest both helps corrupt the tyrant, as Otanes said, and enhances a free state, for in freedom the individual is part of the state, and thus, as he prospers, so does his state. Under tyranny, however, individuals have nothing of their own and no hope of gaining anything, for they are slaves. So to Herodotus the political situations of combatants in an engagement were not only important factors to consider, they were decisive. As Herodotus' contemporary, Hippocrates of Cos, put it:

"We have now discussed the organic and structural differences between the populations of Asia and Europe, but we have still to consider the problem why the Asiatics are of a less war-like and a more tame disposition than the Europeans. The deficiency of spirit and courage observable in the human inhabitants of Asia has for its principal cause the low margin of seasonal variability in the temperature of that continent, which is approximately stable throughout the year. Such a climate does not produce those mental shocks and violent bodily dislocations which would naturally render the temperament ferocious and introduce a stronger current of irrationality and passion than would be the case under stable conditions. It is invariably changes that stimulate the human mind and that prevent it from remaining passive. These, in my view, are the reasons why the Asiatic race is unmilitary, but I must not omit the factor of institutions. The greater part of Asia is under monarchical government; and wherever men are not their own masters and not free agents, but are under despotic rule,

they are not concerned to make themselves militarily efficient but, on the contrary, to avoid being regarded as good military material—the reason being that they are not playing for equal stakes. It is theirs, presumably, to serve and struggle and die under compulsion from their masters and far from the sight of their wives and children and friends. Whenever they acquit themselves like men, it is their masters who are exalted and aggrandized by their achievements, while their own share of the profits is the risking and the losing of their lives. And not only this, but, in the case of people so circumstanced, it is also inevitable that the inactivity consequent upon the absence of war should have a taming effect upon the temperament, so that even a naturally courageous and spirited individual would be inhibited on the intellectual side by the prevailing institutions. A strong argument in favor of my contention is furnished by the fact that all the Hellenes and non-Hellenes in Asia who are not under despotic rule, but are free agents and struggle for their own benefit, are as warlike as any populations in the world—the reason being that they stake their lives in their own cause and reap the rewards of their own valor (and the penalties of their own cowardice, into the bargain). You will also find that the Asiatics differ among one another, some being finer and others poorer in quality, and these differences also have their cause in the seasonal climatic variations, as I have stated above.”¹⁴

To Hippocrates, the father of medicine, the role of the various constitutions in shaping the nature of men was one to be studied in cold clinical detachment as a static condition. To Hippocrates, it did not matter if it was a political institution or a nearby bog, for both affected men in predictable

¹⁴Hippocrates, On Airs, Waters, and Places, 16; the translation is that of Arnold J. Toynbee, Greek Historical Thought (New York, 1962) pp. 143-144.

ways. But the father of history went further in his appreciation of this principle. He studied the Greco-Persian war not as a series of battles the way a military historian might do, but as a psychological struggle on the part of the Greeks to overcome their fear of the Persians and to oppose them with fierce determination. They did so and won. To him, therefore, it remained to find the cause of their bravery. Political freedom, for Herodotus, was what made the Greeks fight. So a political institution affected more than the nature of men, it reached as far as their very destiny. Men, he believed, shaped their institutions by their own actions or decisions. It was, therefore, in man's hands to control his own destiny, barring accident (θεῶν τὰ ἴσα νεμόντων), by making wise political decisions. Herodotus has taken it as part of his task to show what "wise political decisions" were and what were foolish ones. Now he leaves it to his fellow man to learn or to ignore the lessons of history and to choose between deliberately shaping or leaving to chance the future of himself and his descendants.

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