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HERODOTUS' EPIGRAPHICAL INTERESTS*

τίς κεν αἰνήσειε νόωι πίσυνος Λίνδου ναέταν Κλεόβουλον,
ἀεναοῖς ποταμοῖς' ἄνθεσί τ' εἰαρινοῖς
ἀελίου τε φλογὶ χρυσέας τε σελάνας
καὶ θαλασσαίαισι δίναις' ἀντία θέντα μένος στάλας;
ἅπαντα γάρ ἐστι θεῶν ἥσσω· λίθον δὲ
καὶ βρότεοι παλάμαι θραύοντι· μωροῦ
φωτὸς ἅδε βούλα. Simonides, fr. 581

Herodotus holds an honoured place among the pioneers of Greek epigraphy.[1] We seek in vain for earlier signs of any appreciation of the historical value of inscriptions,[2] and though we may conjecture that the antiquarian interests of some of his contemporaries or near-contemporaries[3] might well have led them in this direction, our view of the beginnings of Greek epigraphical study must be based on Herodotus, whether or not he truly deserves to be regarded as its ἀρχηγέτης.

Apart from its significance in the history of scholarship Herodotus' use of inscriptions may be expected to throw some light on his methods and on his conception of his task. He cites epigraphic evidence throughout his work and in relation to a wide range of topics; if his use of this material suggests any general conclusions, we do not need to allow for the bias of a single source or the effect of peculiar local conditions, as we must when we consider his accounts of individual episodes or areas.

We are relatively well placed to assess his procedure. We have a reasonably clear idea of the general appearance of the various scripts concerned (both Greek and Oriental), and in this respect enjoy a considerable advantage over the majority of Herodotus' original audience. Three of the inscriptions which he cites have been wholly or partly preserved, and thus provide a simple gauge of his accuracy in reporting such evidence. This point in itself is not of negligible importance, but there are wider questions to be considered: we should ask to what extent Herodotus actually argues

* The following works will be cited by author's name alone:
D. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot*, Berlin, 1971
W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, Oxford, 1912
F. Jacoby, Herodotos Nr. 7, *RE Suppl.* ii (1913), 205–520
L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford, 1961
A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book ii. Introduction, Commentary 1–98*, Leiden, 1975, 1976
R. W. Macan,[1] *Herodotus: the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Books*, London, 1895
R. W. Macan,[2] *Herodotus: the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Books*, London, 1908
A. Masaracchia, *Erodoto, La Sconfitta dei Persiani: Libro ix delle Storie*, Verona, 1978
R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1969
D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge, 1981

[1] See, e.g., the surveys of M. N. Tod, *OCD* 394 s.v. Epigraphy, Greek; W. Larfeld, *Griech. Epigraphik*[3] (Munich, 1914), 7; M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca* (Roma, 1967), i. 27.

[2] We need not linger over the claims of Acusilaus of Argos to be regarded as an epigraphical pioneer: τὰ γὰρ Ἀκουσιλάου νοθεύεται (Acusil. *FGrHist* 2 T 7), and the bronze tablets of genealogical content dug up by his father (*FGrHist* 2 T 1) belong with the Trojan War diaries of Dictys and the golden tablets which provided Joseph Smith with scriptural foundation for the peculiar doctrines of the Mormon church; see further W. Speyer, *Bücherfunde in der Glaubenswerbung der Antike* (Göttingen, 1970), esp. 43ff.

[3] In particular, Hippias and Hellanicus.

from epigraphic evidence, what importance he appears to attach to it, and what his principles of selection are. We may of course often surmise that his information derives from inscriptions where he does not explicitly cite them, and some may judge this aspect of his work incomparably more interesting than the matters with which this article is concerned. But a close study of his methods and principles when he does not disguise his use of epigraphic material is surely an indispensable preliminary to examining the much more complex problems raised by his tacit use of it, above all if we are to avoid imputing to Herodotus an anachronistic sophistication in handling such evidence; inferences which may seem no more than common sense to a generation accustomed to weigh judiciously the comparative merits of Leiden and Robertian brackets often depend on assumptions as alien to Herodotus as his geographical presuppositions appear to us.

These questions cannot be treated in isolation from the historical and archaeological background, and we cannot altogether evade certain problems about Herodotus' reliability. That happy faith in the historian's trustworthiness which prevailed thirty years ago when Hans Volkmann published his essay on this topic[4] has been called in question by Detlev Fehling, who, exploring systematically an approach attempted independently by Panofsky and (more readably) Sayce a century ago,[5] has raised (or rather revived) fundamental doubts about Herodotus' honesty by a detailed examination of his source-citations.[6] Fehling may at times appear excessively sceptical, but it is hard to see how anyone who has read his book with reasonable care (and his severest critics appear not to have understood his arguments) could remain unaffected by some anxiety that Herodotus' reputation for good faith can only be maintained at the cost of his intelligence; some may judge the price too high. If examination of Herodotus' use of inscriptions can help to resolve the uncertainties surrounding this issue, well and good; but that is not my primary purpose. However, the revival of these ancient suspicions entails greater caution than has long been customary in allowing Herodotus the benefit of the doubt, and I must ask the reader not to interpret my circumspection as evidence of adverse prejudice.

In the course of his work Herodotus cites the following inscriptions:

(a) *Greek*[7]

Delphi	1.51.3–4	(forged Spartan dedication)
	8.82.1	(serpent column; Meiggs–Lewis 27)
Bosporus	4.87.1	(Greek and cuneiform stele erected by Darius at the Bosporus)
Samos	4.88.2	(dedicatory epigram for Mandrocles' picture)
	4.14.3	(memorial to patriotic trierarchs)
Athens	5.77	(epigram celebrating victory over Chalcis and Boeotia in 506; Meiggs–Lewis 15)
Euboea	8.22	(Themistoclean propaganda)

[4] H. Volkmann, 'Die Inschriften im Geschichtswerk des Herodot', *Convivium* (*Festschr. K. Ziegler*) (Stuttgart, 1954), 41–65.

[5] H. Panofsky, *Quaestionum de historiae Herodoteae fontibus pars prima* (diss. Berlin, 1885); A. H. Sayce, *The Ancient Empires of the East, Herodotos i–iii* (London, 1883); 'The season and extent of the travels of Herodotos in Egypt', *JPh* 14 (1885), 257–86.

[6] Similarly disquieting conclusions are suggested in a series of articles by O. K. Armayor, bearing mainly on the extent of Herodotus' travels: see in particular *TAPA* 108 (1978), 1ff., *HSCP* 82 (1978), 45ff., 84 (1980), 53ff.

[7] Listed according to the order in which I shall discuss them.

Thermopylae	7.228	(three epitaphs)
Thebes	5.59–61	(three 'Cadmean' dedications)[8]

(b) *Oriental*

Lydian	1.93.3	(from Alyattes' tomb)
	7.30.2	(Croesus' boundary-marker at Phrygian border)
Babylonian	1.187	(from Nitocris' tomb)
Persian	3.88.3	(from an equestrian relief of Darius)
	4.87.1	(stele at Bosporus erected by Darius)
	4.91	(Darius' stele at R. Tearus)
Egyptian	2.102	(Sesostris' victory-stelae)
	2.106	(from Sesostris' triumphal relief)
	2.125.6	(from the pyramid of Cheops)
	2.136.4	(from the pyramid of Asychis)
	2.141.6	(from a statue of Sethos)

We start at Delphi (1.51.3–4), and not with the best of auguries, since Herodotus claims that the first inscription he cites is a forgery. Among Croesus' lavish offerings were two *περιρραντήρια . . . χρύσεόν τε καὶ ἀργύρεον, τῶν τῷ χρυσέῳ ἐπιγέγραπται Λακεδαιμονίων φαμένων εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγοντες*·[9] *ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο Κροίσου, ἐπέγραψε δὲ τῶν τις Δελφῶν Λακεδαιμονίοισι βουλόμενος χαρίζεσθαι, τοῦ ἐπιστάμενος τὸ οὔνομα οὐκ ἐπιμνήσομαι.*[10] We may see here a warning against undue confidence in epigraphic evidence. But it should also be noted that Herodotus' inventory of Croesus' offerings is not so precise that this detail is really required; its function is rather to persuade us that he had access to particularly knowledgeable sources at Delphi.

We are on firmer ground with his other Delphic inscription, the serpent-column offered to Apollo by the states which defeated the Persians. After relating the crucial part played by a single Tenian ship just before the battle of Salamis he adds (8.82): *διὰ δὲ τοῦτο τὸ ἔργον ἐνεγράφηταν Τήνιοι ἐν Δελφοῖσι ἐς τὸν τρίποδα ἐν τοῖσι τὸν βάρβαρον κατελοῦσι.*

This inscription survives, having been transported by Constantine to Constantinople.[11] *Τενιοι* is to be read on the seventh coil, which, like the tenth, bears four names instead of the normal three, the Tenians having apparently been added, like the Siphnians, by an afterthought. However, our satisfaction at finding Herodotus' account thus confirmed may be slightly diminished by the inaccuracy of his subsequent description of the monument (9.81), *ὁ τρίπους ὁ χρύσεος . . . ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ τρικαρήνου ὄφιος τοῦ χαλκέου ἑπεστεώς*. The golden tripod in fact rested on a column representing three intertwined serpents, not, as Herodotus says, one serpent with three heads, and the inscription (which, we may note, he here fails to mention) is on the serpent-column, not, as he previously told us, on the tripod. These discrepancies are

[8] I have omitted from this list the statue at Metapontum *ἐπωνυμίην ἔχων Ἀριστέω* (4.15.2–4); it is not quite clear whether Herodotus means that there was an inscription on the statue, or simply that it was generally known as the statue of Aristeas, but the latter seems much more likely. Volkmann, who does not discuss the passage, evidently did not think it referred to an inscription.

[9] An extraordinarily harsh anacolouthon: *φάμενον . . . λέγον* Madvig (adopted by Legrand in the Budé edition).

[10] For a similar refusal to name names cf. 2.123.3; 4.43.7.

[11] For details see Meiggs–Lewis, pp. 57ff.

disconcerting in the description of a monument which we should suppose peculiarly interesting to him, dedicated at a sanctuary with which we are given every reason to believe he was extremely familiar.

A historian of the Persian Wars might be expected to exploit to the full the testimony of this victory-inscription. Plutarch (*de Herod. malig.* 870c) complains that Herodotus' depreciatory account of the Corinthian contribution to the allied cause ignores their honourable place in the list of those responsible for the victory: *τρίτην... μετὰ Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ μετ' αὐτοὺς* (sc. *τοὺς Ἀθηναίους*) *ἐγχαραττομένην τοῖς ἀπο τῶν βαρβάρων ἀναθήμασιν.* This inconvenient fact evidently did not square with Herodotus' preconceptions: did he simply fail to see what did not suit him, or did he somehow persuade himself that this evidence of Corinthian valour was of slight weight compared with the oral traditions of Athens and Sparta? We may also note that four of the states mentioned by Herodotus as participating in the war, Croton (8.47), Pale in Cephallenia (9.28, 31), Seriphos (8.46, 48), and the Opuntian Locrians (7.203, 207; 8.1–2), are absent from the serpent-column; we might have expected these omissions to call forth some comment.[12]

This rather unbalanced and superficial treatment of a monument of central importance for the theme of the latter part of Herodotus' work raises the suspicion that his knowledge of it rests more on hearsay than on independent study. It would be perverse to suggest that he had not seen it at all, but it does not appear that he studied it with close attention. We may suspect that the addition of the Tenians to the list caused a minor stir (like the inclusion of German Rhodes Scholars on the New College War Memorial), and was known to many who had not inspected the inscription personally.

We may now turn to the inscriptions associated with Darius' crossing of the Bosporus. The first is the army catalogue which the Persian king erected there (4.87.1–2):

θεησάμενος δὲ καὶ τὸν Βόσπορον στήλας ἔστησε δύο ἐπ' αὐτῷ λίθου λευκοῦ, ἐνταμὼν γράμματα ἐς μὲν τὴν Ἀσσύρια, ἐς δὲ τὴν Ἑλληνικά, ἔθνεα πάντα ὅσα περ ἦγε· ἦγε δὲ πάντα τῶν ἦρχε· τούτων μυριάδες ἐξηριθμήθησαν, χωρὶς τοῦ ναυτικοῦ, ἑβδομήκοντα σὺν ἱππεῦσι, νέες δὲ ἑξακόσιαι συνελέχθησαν. τῇσι μέν νυν στήλῃσι ταύτῃσι Βυζάντιοι κομίσαντες ἐς τὴν πόλιν ὕστερον τούτων ἐχρήσαντο πρὸς τὸν βωμὸν τῆς Ὀρθωσίης Ἀρτέμιδος, χωρὶς ἑνὸς λίθου· οὗτος δὲ κατελείφθη παρὰ τοῦ Διονύσου τὸν νηὸν ἐν Βυζαντίῳ γραμμάτων Ἀσσυρίων πλέος.

The location of these stelae is not made as clear as it might be, though their re-use by the Byzantines probably implies that both were erected on the European side of the strait. They recall the multilingual inscriptions (in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian cuneiform, and Egyptian hieroglyphic) which Darius had erected in Egypt;[13] since a Greek would have been unable to distinguish one cuneiform script

[12] It is interesting (though more significant in relation to Thucydides) that though Herodotus speaks of Pausanias' arrogance towards the allies (8.3) and of his ambition to rule all Greece (5.32), he says nothing about the couplet (subsequently erased by the Spartans), engraved on the monument by the regent's instructions, in which he was described as *Ἑλλήνων ἀρχηγός* (Th. 1.132.2–3).

[13] In addition to the well-known stelae from the Isthmus of Suez we may compare the inscriptions on the colossal monolithic statue of Darius discovered at Susa in 1972 (*Journal Asiatique* 260 [1972], 235 ff., *Cahiers DAFI* 4 [1974], 73–160). The cuneiform inscriptions, on the right-hand side of the robe, run thus: 'A great god is Ahuramazda who created this earth, who created this sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king. This is the stone statue which Darius the King ordered to be made in Egypt so that he who should

from another, we may probably take it that these stones too were multilingual. We should note that Herodotus assumes the expression *Ἀσσύρια γράμματα* (first attested here) to be familiar to his readers, though it is hard to say whether he expected them to understand it as, specifically, 'cuneiform', or, more generally, 'Oriental writing'.[14] Some have supposed that Herodotus derived from the Greek version his figure of 700,000 for the army with which Darius invaded Scythia;[15] but he does not himself say so. His main purpose in recording these stelae was surely to mark a critical stage in Darius' advance.

Likewise associated with the Persian crossing of the Bosporus is the first of Herodotus' two Samian inscriptions, the epigram attached to the painting of Mandrocles' pontoon, which the Samian engineer dedicated at the Heraeum (4.88):[16]

Δαρεῖος δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα ἡσθεὶς τῇ σχεδίῃ τὸν ἀρχιτέκτονα αὐτῆς Μανδροκλέα τὸν Σάμιον ἐδωρήσατο πᾶσι δέκα. ἀπ' ὧν δὴ Μανδροκλέης ἀπαρχήν, ζῷα γραψάμενος πᾶσαν τὴν ζεῦξιν τοῦ Βοσπόρου καὶ βασιλέα τε Δαρεῖον ἐν προεδρίῃ κατήμενον καὶ τὸν στρατὸν αὐτοῦ διαβαίνοντα, ταῦτα γραψάμενος ἀνέθηκε ἐς τὸ Ἥραιον, ἐπιγράψας τάδε·

Βόσπορον ἰχθυόεντα γεφυρώσας ἀνέθηκε
Μανδροκλέης Ἥρῃ μνημόσυνον σχεδίης,
αὐτῷ μὲν στέφανον περιθείς, Σαμίοισι δὲ κῦδος,
Δαρείου βασιλέος ἐκτελέσας κατὰ νοῦν.

Herodotus' use of *ἐπιγράψας* for the epigram, as opposed to the middle, *γραψάμενος*, for the picture, suggests that he supposed (rightly or wrongly) that Mandrocles composed the lines himself,[17] a detail which undoubtedly enhances their interest and may partly explain why he thought them worth quoting. But in any case the epigram forms a very satisfactory conclusion to his account of the fateful step which took the Persians beyond the limits ordained for them.[18]

The other Samian inscription is merely summarised. It was carved on the *stele* erected in honour of the eleven patriotic trierarchs who stood their ground at Lade

see it in time to come should know that the Persian man has taken Egypt. I am Darius, the Great King, the King of kings, King of lands, King on this great earth, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid. Darius the King says: May Ahuramazda protect me and all my works'. On the left side of the robe a much longer hieroglyphic text describes Darius in purely Egyptian terms. A convenient brief account of the statue is given by J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (London, 1983), 58, 238 n. 3, plate 15; for more detailed discussion see M. C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (*Acta Iranica* 3e sér., Vol. ix, Leiden, 1979), 61ff., 68ff. It is worth noting that though Herodotus refers to Darius' concern for the Red Sea canal (2.158.1; 4.39.1) he does not mention the inscriptions erected there. (Fehling's objections (102 n. 13) to treating the Suez canal stelae as a parallel seem to me hypercritical.)

[14] Thucydides (4.50.2) describes a Persian letter as written in *Ἀσσύρια γράμματα*; *pace* Gomme, the script used must have been Aramaic, though whether Thucydides realised this is another matter. For a discussion of the phrase's connotations see C. Nylander, '*ΑCCYPIA ΓPAMMATA*: remarks on the 21st "Letter of Themistocles"', *OAth* 8 (1968), 119ff.

[15] So, e.g., C. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece* (Oxford, 1963), 351.

[16] Page 193–4.

[17] Page (231), discussing Herodotus' use of *ἐπιγράψας* in connection with the epitaph for Megistias (7.228), takes it for granted that the verb merely means 'that the subject made arrangements for, and paid the cost of, the composition and the inscribing'. Still, in the case of Megistias, common sense suggests that Simonides, the subject of *ἐπιγράψας*, did in fact compose the epigram.

[18] It has been suggested that Herodotus drew extensively on this picture for his description of Xerxes' host (7.61ff.); it would be pleasant to suppose that prolonged study of the painting impressed the accompanying epigram on his memory.

despite the orders of their commanders (6.14.3): *καί cφι τὸ κοινὸν τὸ Caμίων ἔδωκε διὰ τοῦτο τὸ πρῆγμα ἐν cτήλῃ ἀναγραφῆναι πατρόθεν ὡc ἀνδράci ἀγαθοῖci γενομένοιci, καὶ ἔcτι αὕτη ἡ cτήλη ἐν τῇ ἀγορῇ*. This monument evidently had an importance beyond its function of keeping green the memory of a small band of courageous freedom-fighters. In due course the Samians had reason to feel embarrassed by the performance of the majority of their contingent at Lade, and the memorial contributed, in some measure, to their attempt at self-justification.

Herodotus must have seen these Samian inscriptions for himself, probably on many occasions and at leisure; the *Suda* life tells us that he spent some time in Samos, and this statement is confirmed by what seems a disproportionate concern with Samian affairs.[19]

Herodotus' only Attic inscription is another dedicatory epigram, commemorating the Athenian victory over Boeotia and Chalcis in 507/6 (5.77):[20]

καὶ τῶν λύτρων τὴν δεκάτην ἀνέθηκαν ποιηcάμενοι τέθριππον χάλκεον· τὸ δὲ ἀριcτερῆc χειρὸc ἕcτηκε πρῶτα ἐcιόντι ἐc τὰ προπύλαια τὰ ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλι· ἐπιγέγραπται δέ οἱ τάδε·

ἔθνεα Βοιωτῶν καὶ Χαλκιδέων δαμάcαντεc
παῖδεc Ἀθηναίων ἔργμαcιν ἐν πολέμου
δεcμῷ ἐν ἀχλυόεντι cιδηρέῳ ἔcβεcαν ὕβριν·
τῶν ἵππουc δεκάτην Παλλάδι τάcδ' ἔθεcαν.

Fragments of two monument-bases bearing these lines have survived, one in lettering of the late sixth century, while the other is most probably to be dated after the battle of Oenophyta (*c.* 457); the latter gives the lines in the same order as the literary sources, but the older stone shows that originally the third line came first and *vice versa*. I have underlined what is preserved by the earlier stone and used half-brackets to indicate what can be read on the later.

The change in order does not concern us. But we face an awkward problem in the third line. Herodotus' MSS are divided between *ἀχνυ(ν)θέντι* and *ἀχλυόεντι*. *ἀχνυθέντι* is inadmissible; the aorist participle of *ἄχνυμαι* is not attested, but the *υ* should be short, while *ἀχνυνθέντι* is an impossible form;[21] in any case, the required meaning, 'painful, grievous', is incredible. *ἀχλυόειc* should mean 'dark, misty'; there is no parallel for the figurative sense 'gloomy, dismal' offered in LSJ.[22] There is very much to recommend Hecker's conjecture *ἀχνυόεντι*, which involves minimal alteration of *ἀχνυθέντι*; though the epithet does not occur elsewhere, the noun which it presupposes, *ἀχνύc*, is attested in the *Etymologicum Genuinum Magnum*, where it is glossed by *ἡ λύπη*.[23] The variants of our MS-tradition, neither of which

[19] See further B. M. Mitchell, 'Herodotus and Samos', *JHS* 95 (1975), 75–91, R. Tölle-Kastenbein, *Herodot u. Samos* (Bochum, 1976), 9ff., 104ff.

[20] Meiggs–Lewis no. 15, pp. 28f., Page, 191–3, P. A. Hansen, *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* (Berlin, 1983), no. 179, pp. 99f. The first two lines (according to the later, Herodotean order) are cited in a papyrus commentary of the late first century A.D. (*P. Oxy.* 2535); no other published papyrus covers the passage.

[21] Page well emphasises that it is certainly not to be defended (as Friedlaender attempted) by the alleged parallel from a now lost inscription of much later date, published by Meritt, *Hesperia* 16 (1947), 289, from a copy made by Sir George Wheler during his visit to Athens in 1676, *ἀχνυθὲν τόδε δῶρον ὑπὲρ τάφον εἵcατο μήτηρ*, where Peek's *ἀχνυόεν* (*GVI* No. 238, p. 62) is surely right.

[22] Though this interpretation is virtually renounced in the Supplement, where *ἀχνυόεντι* is recommended as probably the correct reading here.

[23] P. 182, 3. LSJ's ascription to Callimachus of the line quoted to illustrate the meaning reflects Schneider, not Pfeiffer; the reference should now read *Suppl. Hell.* 1031.

can plausibly be derived from the other, thus represent alternative misconceptions of an abstruse epithet.

ἀχνυόεντι, then, appears to be what Herodotus wrote, and was, presumably, what the composer of the epigram intended. But there is an epigraphic complication: the stoichedon alignment of the later inscription requires the same number of letters to be restored before caν in both hexameters, and with ἀχνυόεντι (as with ἀχλυόεντι and ἀχνυθέντι) there is a letter too many. The epigraphists appear to favour restoring ἀχνύεντι, but if we suppose that this false form stood on the stone we face the paradox that the archetype of Herodotus' MSS appears to have had the right reading despite an error in the inscription which served as Herodotus' source; it is not easy to believe that either Herodotus or a scribe arrived at ἀχνυόεντι by conjecture.[24] Since we can hardly avoid the inference that the stonecutter accidentally left out a letter at some point in the line, it is surely more probable that the omitted letter was one which a reader would supply almost automatically and which would thus be more easily overlooked at the 'proof-reading' stage in the monument's construction; the omission of iota adscript from one of the two datives which suffer correption seems the most likely accident.[25]

A more worrying problem is raised by the description of the monument's location: τὸ δὲ ἀριστερῆς χειρὸς ἕστηκε πρῶτα ἐσιόντι ἐς τὰ προπύλαια τὰ ἐν τῇ ἀκρόπολι. This seems to mean that it was just within, or almost immediately outside, the entrance to the Acropolis, but this location is hard to reconcile with Pausanias' account (1.28.2), which implies that when he visited the Acropolis the monument was near Pheidias' bronze statue of Athena. A rock-cutting which would fit the chariot is still visible by the cutting for the base of the Athena Promachos. A double move obviously cannot be excluded: we might suppose that the monument was originally set up where Pausanias situates it and then, having been destroyed or removed in 480, was set up outside the pre-Mnesiclean propylaea when it was restored after Oenophyta, and stood there until it was transferred to its earlier position some time after Herodotus' visit.[26] A more radical solution has recently been propounded by Antony Podlecki,[27] who sees in the apparent discrepancy support for his contention that Herodotus was never in Athens at all. This thesis is not immediately persuasive; given the extraordinary fascination of Athens in the mid-fifth century and its peculiar interest for Herodotus, it is hard to imagine how, in the course of a life's wanderings which took him from Halicarnassus to Thurii (to say nothing of more exotic destinations),[28] he could have resisted the temptation to visit the city for himself.[29] We have, however, other indications that he was muddled about the topography of the Acropolis. The confusion and obscurity of his account of the Persian ascent of the Acropolis and the rebirth of Athena's olive-tree (8.53, 55) led Macan to conclude that he had composed this part of his narrative before

[24] It is of course conceivable (though it may not be thought very probable) that Herodotus knew the verses from an oral tradition which preserved the correct form of the epithet.

[25] For similar errors in fifth-century inscriptions see Hansen *CEG* nos. 167 (Chios), 380 (Arcadia), with notes *ad loc.*

[26] So Meiggs–Lewis. On the pre-Mnesiclean propylaea see W. B. Dinsmoor Jr, *Propylaea*, i (Princeton, 1980).

[27] 'Herodotus in Athens?' in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory: Studies presented to Fritz Schachermeyr* (Berlin, 1977), 246–65 (esp. 259f.).

[28] I must admit to some scepticism regarding the greater part of Herodotus' alleged mileage, but the point is not material to the argument here.

[29] Still, we may smile at Jacoby's confident claim (233) that 'Eine der sichersten Tatsachen in H's Leben ist seine intime Verbindung mit Athen und im besondern mit dem Kreise um Perikles'.

he visited Athens, on the basis of information provided by Athenian émigré sources;[30] but this compromise inevitably raises the further question of why he failed to revise his account in the light of first-hand knowledge of the site.

Taking these difficulties together with other topographical inaccuracies in Herodotus' work[31] I think we should relegate the hypothesis of a double move to the status of a remotely conceivable possibility. It is a nice question how inaccurate a reasonably intelligent person may be in describing a site which he has himself visited, but it is surely anachronisic to suppose that Herodotus would have thought to make topographical notes or sketch-maps, as might a traveller in a more bookish age, and it should not surprise us if he had a better memory for poetry than for the lie of the land. But the gratuitous detail of this apparently erroneous information is noteworthy; there was no call for him to offer more than the fact that the monument was set on the Acropolis. Of course, this topographical difficulty takes on a rather different aspect if we suppose Herodotus to have written first and foremost for an Athenian audience; but that is not an assumption to be accepted without demur.

It is, as Macan observes,[32] a little surprising that Herodotus seems not to have asked himself how these relics of a victory a generation before the Persian invasion had survived the sack of Athens; but we all, at times, fail to ask questions which on subsequent reflection appear obvious. It is more profitable to consider what may have been his motives for recording this inscription. Very many of the events which he relates were, after all, commemorated by dedicatory or sepulchral inscriptions, and he was clearly highly selective. These lines add no further factual details to his narrative, but they provide a stately, formal conclusion to his account of the extraordinary success which followed Athens' liberation from tyranny, illustrating one of his favourite ideas, the stimulating effect of political change,[33] and demonstrating beyond peradventure that democracy is a force to be reckoned with (78): *δηλοῖ δὲ οὐ κατ' ἓν μοῦνον ἀλλὰ πανταχῇ ἡ ἰσηγορίη ὡς ἐστὶ χρῆμα σπουδαῖον.*

We should next consider an inscription (or series of inscriptions) of Attic authorship, though not erected on Attic soil, but at the northern end of Euboea (8.22). Themistocles, seeking to subvert the Ionians in Xerxes' navy,

ἐπορεύετο περὶ τὰ πότιμα ὕδατα, ἐντάμνων ἐν τοῖσι λίθοισι γράμματα, τὰ Ἴωνες ἐπελθόντες τῇ ὑστεραίῃ ἡμέρῃ ἐπὶ τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον ἐπελέξαντο. τὰ δὲ γράμματα τάδε ἔλεγε· Ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, οὐ ποιέετε δίκαια ἐπὶ τοὺς πατέρας στρατευόμενοι καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καταδουλούμενοι. ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν πρὸς ἡμέων γίνεσθε· εἰ δὲ ὑμῖν ἐστι τοῦτο μὴ δυνατὸν ποιῆσαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου ἡμῖν ἔζεσθε καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ τῶν Καρῶν δέεσθε τὰ αὐτὰ ὑμῖν ποιέειν· εἰ δὲ μηδέτερον τούτων οἷόν τε γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀναγκαίης μέζονος κατέζευχθε ἢ ὥστε ἀπίστασθαι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ, ἐπεὰν συμμίσγωμεν, ἐθελοκακέετε, μεμνημένοι ὅτι ἀπ' ἡμέων γεγόνατε καὶ ὅτι ἀρχῆθεν ἡ ἔχθρη πρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον ἀπ' ὑμέων ἡμῖν γέγονε.

Herodotus is quite definite that this text was not merely painted up, but cut in the rock, apparently in more than one place. It is the only Greek prose inscription which

[30] Macan[2] on 8.55. The problems presented by Herodotus' description of the location of the Aglaurion have recently been discussed by G. S. Dontas, 'The true Aglaurion', *Hesperia* 52 (1983), 48ff., but his attempt to defend Herodotus is unconvincing: see further D. M. Lewis, *Postscript* in A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*[2] (London, 1984), 607–8.

[31] We may compare his mistake about the orientation of Thermopylae: see below, p. 289.

[32] Macan[1] i.lxi.

[33] Cf. 1.66.1; 5.66.1; 7.156.1–2.

he thinks worthy of a *verbatim* report; τὰ δὲ γράμματα τάδε ἔλεγε... Θεμιστοκλέης ταῦτα ἔγραψε, this (not merely something like this, τοιάδε... τοιαῦτα) was what Themistocles wrote.

Herodotus' procedure here is surely slightly irresponsible. Common sense indicates that Themistocles' epigraphic propaganda would have had to be much more succinct;[34] what Herodotus offers must be an imaginative reconstruction, largely based on subsequent events[35] (not simply a careless copy or paraphrase).[36] We have here an extension of his practice of using *oratio recta* in circumstances where no-one would suppose that he could have had any report of what was actually said; with the confident assurance of a novelist he devises speeches and conversations appropriate to occasion and character.[37] Normally we are not troubled by this practice; it is virtually self-evident that he could not have had reliable testimony as to what transpired in Candaules' harem or Xerxes' privy council, and even when he deals with events nearer in time and space we do not imagine that he could, at best, have had more than a summary account of the general line adopted. The reader is not likely to be misled by Herodotus' practice of introducing such speeches with τάδε where the more scrupulous Thucydides would have used τοιάδε.[38] We appreciate the dramatic advantages of direct speech, its greater liveliness and its capacity for convincing characterisation, and willingly suspend our unbelief in a good cause.[39] But a professedly *verbatim* report of a Greek inscription erected in an easily accessible area not more than fifty years before Herodotus wrote is a different matter, and this use of *oratio recta* seems to betray a curious failure to appreciate the peculiar qualities of epigraphic evidence.

Undeniably this licence serves to highlight Themistocles' resourcefulness, and makes more memorable reading than could have been produced by a summary. Though the direct results of this stratagem appear to have been relatively slight (8.85), it was evidently effective in rendering the Ionians suspect to other contingents in Xerxes'

[34] Cf. Macan[2] *ad loc.*: 'These inscriptions were read by the Ionians on the very next day... were they ever read by any other mortals thereafter? How many times the inscription was reproduced by Themistokles Herodotus does not specify, but he gives the *ipsissima verba*, which "cut the record" for argument and rhetoric in inscriptions, a veritable "sermon in stones"; had Herodotus copied the same? Did "Ionians" remember and report them at home? Is the anecdote an Athenian invention? The appeal reads in any case more like a letter or an oral address than like a hastily cut inscription, and that in duplicate'.

[35] We naturally wonder whether Herodotus had evidence that Themistocles specifically mentioned the Carians or whether Halicarnassian patriotism led him to invent a detail which implies that Carian commitment to the Persian cause was, or might reasonably have been thought to be, only half-hearted.

[36] The different versions of the 'Oath of Plataea' show in how offhand a manner Greeks could treat texts while professing to quote them (see further Burn, op. cit. 512ff.), but that kind of inaccuracy is to be explained by a greater reliance on memory.

[37] Herodotus' use of speeches has most recently been examined by P. Hohti, *The Interrelation of Speech and Action in the Histories of Herodotus* (Helsinki, 1976), where references to earlier discussions may be found. We should note that this device occasionally enlivened the dry narrative of Hecataeus (*FGrHist* 1 F 30: Ceyx's agonised rejection of the Heracleidae).

[38] If our MSS are to be trusted, there are a few exceptions. τάδε is used to introduce a speech instead of τοιάδε at 3.29.2 and 5.112.1; both are short passages, and possibly Thucydides believed that he could virtually reproduce what was said. ὧδε is used to introduce the speech of the ephor Sthenelaidas (1.85.3), remarkable for its blunt laconism, and Archidamus' solemn appeal to gods and heroes before Plataea (2.74.2).

[39] The technique is of course open to objection where Herodotus might or might not have had reasonably reliable information as to who said what (as with the various deliberations on the Greek side in 480 and 479).

army (8.90), and a subsequent reference (9.98.4)[40] shows that Herodotus was impressed by it.

We move now to graver matters, the epigrams honouring those who fought at Thermopylae (7.228):[41]

θαφθεῖσι δέ σφι αὐτοῦ ταύτῃ τῇ περ ἔπεσον καὶ τοῖσι πρότερον τελευτήσασι ἢ ⟨τοὺς⟩ ὑπὸ Λεωνίδεω ἀποπεμφθέντας οἴχεσθαι, ἐπιγέγραπται γράμματα λέγοντα τάδε·

μυριάσιν ποτὲ τῇδε τριηκοσίαις ἐμάχοντο
ἐκ Πελοποννάσου χιλιάδες τέτορες.

ταῦτα μὲν δὴ τοῖσι πᾶσι ἐπιγέγραπται, τοῖσι δὲ Σπαρτιήτῃσι ἰδίῃ·

ὦ ξεῖν', ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε
κείμεθα τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

Λακεδαιμονίοισι μὲν δὴ τοῦτο, τῷ δὲ μάντι τόδε·

μνῆμα τόδε κλεινοῖο Μεγιστία, ὅν ποτε Μῆδοι
Σπερχειὸν ποταμὸν κτείναν ἀμειψάμενοι,
μάντιος, ὃς τότε Κῆρας ἐπερχομένας σάφα εἰδὼς
οὐκ ἔτλη Σπάρτης ἡγεμόνας προλιπεῖν.[42]

ἐπιγράμμασι μέν νυν καὶ στήλῃσι, ἔξω ἢ τὸ τοῦ μάντιος ἐπίγραμμα, Ἀμφικτύονές εἰσί σφεας οἱ ἐπικοσμήσαντες· τὸ δὲ τοῦ μάντιος Μεγιστίεω Σιμωνίδης ὁ Λεωπρέπεός ἐστι κατὰ ξεινίην ὁ ἐπιγράψας.

It was pointed out half a century ago by Wade-Gery[43] that the first of these poems is not, as Herodotus appears to have supposed, an epitaph, but simply marks the site of the battlefield. Sir Denys Page, unrivalled in his gift for exploding fallacy and misconception, restated the case with greater force, and considered the implications:

> It is plain that Herodotus has not stopped to think what he is saying, and that he has seriously misled his audience. The epigram which he quotes as an epitaph on Thespians, Spartans, and other Peloponnesians, is not an epitaph on anybody; it simply states how many Peloponnesians came to fight at Thermopylae, including those who departed before the last stand. Moreover, if it were an epitaph, as he says, 'inscribed for the men buried just where they fell', the Thespians at least (to say nothing of other non-Peloponnesians killed 'before the departure of those whom Leonidas sent away') must be among those commemorated. But they are not. The inscription explicitly says that the men commemorated are those 'from the Peloponnese'. We are asked to believe that the Amphictyones approved, as a memorial designed to include the heroic Thespians, whose entire fighting-force was destroyed in the battle, an epigram which does not even mention them. We should refuse to believe anything of the sort, if the epigram were an epitaph; and plainly it is not.

Page argues that Herodotus was misled by the Spartan informants to whom he owed virtually the whole of his account of Thermopylae:

> They did not suppress the fact that the Thespians fought and died in the last stand, but the inscriptions which they quoted to Herodotus were those which commemorated Peloponnesians and Spartans only. And Herodotus has naively repeated what he was told, not noticing that this

[40] Krueger suggested that this sentence is an interpolation; it is certainly clumsily expressed (see Macan *ad loc.*), but seems an unlikely addition; see Masaracchia *ad loc.*

[41] On the Thermopylae epigrams see Page 195–6, 231–4; he well emphasises that Herodotus evidently did not believe either the first or the second poem to be the work of Simonides.

[42] Stein's ἡγεμόνα is very attractive.

[43] *JHS* 53 (1933), 72f.; this misconception has dictated Herodotus' figure for Greek fatalities at Thermopylae (8.25.2).

inscription is not what he says it is, an epitaph; or that, if it were an epitaph, it could not include, as he says it does, the Thespian dead.

This misapprehension seems to me far more disturbing than an inadequate grasp of the topography of the Athenian acropolis. We might wonder whether the attractions of a peculiarly impressive tricolon made Herodotus careless; the desire to achieve a striking stylistic effect may easily produce inaccuracy. We start with a terse and colourless tribute to a very large group; there follows the memorable, though uninformative, epigram for the select band of heroic Spartans (and, supremely moving as this couplet now seems to us in its restraint, we should surely be less impressed by it if it had simply survived on stone without Herodotus to explain what, exactly, Spartan obedience meant in this case); lastly we have Simonides' memorial to his friend the Acarnanian seer Megistias, who, knowing that death was certain, nevertheless resisted Leonidas' attempts to send him away (7.221),[44] his loyalty a striking tribute to the doomed leader who inspired it.[45] This series of three epigrams is far more powerful than the last two could have been on their own, and though I would not suggest that Herodotus consciously imposed a misinterpretation on the first, considerations of literary effectiveness may have fostered misconception.

It seems to me debatable whether Herodotus was quite as naive as Page believed. His admiration for Sparta[46] is surely too fundamental to be simply the result of intensive indoctrination by Spartan sources. Even in his famous tribute to the services of Athens to Greece (7.139) we may detect a note of regret that Spartan heroism was not ultimately the decisive factor in the defeat of Persia.[47] It is customary to suppose that Herodotus fell too easily for Spartan propaganda and accepted uncritically an official myth of Thermopylae which turned a tragic fiasco into a symbol of self-sacrificial devotion; the unsophisticated Halicarnassian, we are to believe, was clay in the hands of the subtle Spartans. I think this view does less than justice to the talent which transmuted a jumble of oral tradition into an episode which, in its appeal to our imagination, rivals Roncevaux and the battle in the West where Arthur fell. But, at all events, the atmosphere which fosters plasmatical manipulation of saga is unlikely to stimulate sober assessment of the relevant epigraphic evidence.

Herodotus does not say that he has seen these epigrams himself. Jacoby was confident that he had,[48] Page firmly sceptical.[49] If there were strong grounds for suspecting that Herodotus had not in fact visited Thermopylae,[50] we should be bound

[44] The epic reminiscences of Simonides' epigram may put us in mind of the Iliadic seer Merops of Perkote ὃς περὶ πάντων | ἤδεε μαντοσύνας, οὐδὲ οἷς παῖδας ἔασκε | στείχειν ἐς πόλεμον φθισήνορα· τὼ δέ οἱ οὔ τι | πειθέσθην· κῆρες γὰρ ἄγον μέλανος θανάτοιο (*Il.* 2.831ff., 11.329ff.). Megistias, who persuaded his son to leave but himself stayed to die a glorious death, may thus be judged happier than the Homeric prophet on two counts.

[45] In marked contrast to the apathetic resignation which Herodotus would have us believe typical of Mardonius' officers (9.16.3–5).

[46] Cf. D. M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden, 1977), 148ff.

[47] We might wonder if the first audience of Sophocles' *Ajax* were struck by a certain parallelism between, on the one hand, the differing roles of Athens and Sparta in defeating the Persians and, on the other, the contrast, already present in the *Iliad* but accentuated by Sophocles, between the soldierly qualities of Odysseus and Ajax.

[48] 'Hier ist kein Zweifel an eigener sorgfältiger Besichtigung des Schlachtfeldes. Er hat den steinernen Löwen des Leonidas in situ gesehen (7.225.2) und die Epigramme für die Gefallenen selbst von den Stelen abgeschrieben (7.228)' (272).

[49] 'It was not Herodotus' custom to read and copy inscriptions, and it is not known whether he ever saw the actual epigrams at Thermopylae. If he did see them, it appears improbable that he made copies of them for use in his *History*.'

[50] As Bury argued, *BSA* 2 (1895–6), 83.

to conclude with Page that he owed his knowledge of the epigrams to hearsay. Notoriously he is ninety degrees out in his orientation, being clearly under the impression that the coast road ran through the pass from north to south;[51] this mistake certainly implies that, if he had visited the area at all before he wrote about it, he did not spend long there,[52] and whether he would have been likely to spend such time as was allowed to him on that historic field in copying down inscriptions can hardly be settled *a priori*. But personally I find most probable Page's view that the epigrams were an integral part of the oral tradition about the battle.[53]

Herodotus' decision to record the epitaphs of those who died at Thermopylae (out of all the many sepulchral inscriptions honouring the dead of the Persian Wars) is surely linked with the peculiarly heroic quality of the fighting there. These verses add to his narrative a note of formal grandeur, enhanced by the contrast with the preceding jest of the imperturbable Deioces.

Hitherto we have nowhere found Herodotus explicitly using an inscription as a source or as confirmation for an otherwise uncertain point; his tacit exploitation of epigraphic evidence is another matter. Nor does he actually claim to have seen any of the inscriptions so far considered, and though it is all but certain that he had studied the Samian ones for himself and would be very surprising if he had not cast eyes on those at Delphi and Athens, he appears not to think it important to distinguish those known to him only from hearsay from those which he had himself inspected. We must now consider the one Greek counter-example, the group of three dedicatory inscriptions from Thebes which he quotes (5.59–61) to support his view that the Greeks had taken over their alphabet from Phoenician sources some generations before the Trojan War. Because he is undoubtedly correct as to provenance, the weaknesses in his exposition have often been overlooked; his argument calls for careful scrutiny.[54]

His starting-point (57) is the *genos* of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the Gephyraei, whose origins he has discovered to be not, as its members believe, Eretrian but Phoenician, their ancestors having come to Boeotia with Cadmus; since the tyranni-

[51] 7.176; cf. 199, 200.1, 201. His orientation is also badly in error at 9.14: see Macan *ad loc.*

[52] Cf. A. R. Burn, op. cit. 380–1: 'Herodotos...had clearly been through the pass, making careful notes, but lacking either the time or the inclination to leave the road...Since he consistently refers to the coast-road as running north and south, with the sea "east" and the mountains "west" of it, it seems that he must have passed only during the middle hours of a day's journey, with the sun high enough overhead to give him no reminder of his bearings' (cf. p. 414). The attempt to save Herodotus' reputation for autopsy by the hypothesis that he was pressed for time is familiar to students of his account of Upper Egypt.

[53] To support his thesis that Herodotus here relies on hearsay Page offers an ingenious (but to my mind unconvincing) argument based on his view of the relative merits of Herodotus' ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι and the reading given by later authors πειθόμενοι νομίμοις (Lycurg. *in Leocr.* 109, D.S. 11.33.2; cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.101 'dum sanctis legibus obsequimur'); judging the latter intrinsically superior, he draws the necessary conclusion that it must therefore be supposed to have stood on the stone, while Herodotus' version represents a corruption. But ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι has a strong claim to primacy as the *lectio difficilior*; most critics have also thought it was in itself better. Page himself followed Herodotus' version when he published *Epigrammata Graeca* (Oxford, 1975), 18.

[54] My approach to these dedications owes much to the valuable discussions of A. Kleingünther, *Πρῶτος Εὑρετής* (*Philologussuppl.* xxvi, i. 1933), 60–5 and Fehling, 102–4. This area would be a quicksand for the non-epigraphist without Miss Jeffery's survey of the origins and diffusion of archaic Greek script; for developments since 1961 see A. Heubeck, *Schrift* (*Archaeologia Homerica*, iii (X), Göttingen, 1979), 73ff., Jeffrey, *CAH* iii² 1.819ff., A. Johnston, 'The extent and use of literacy: the archaeological evidence', *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation* ed. R. Hägg, *Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae* Ser. 4, xxx (Stockholm, 1983), 63–8.

cides' antecedents are of the most marginal relevance to sixth-century Athenian history, we may suspect that Herodotus adverts to the subject merely in order to provide himself with a peg on which to hang his contribution to a current controversy. The Phoenicians who emigrated with Cadmus, he continues, brought many other διδασκάλια to Greece,[55] including script, which, he believes (ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκέειν), was not previously known to the Greeks.[56] To begin with, the émigrés used the same letters as other Phoenicians, μετὰ δὲ χρόνου προβαίνοντος ἅμα τῇ φωνῇ μετέβαλον καὶ τὸν ῥυθμὸν τῶν γραμμάτων: as they came to speak Greek they adapted their alphabet accordingly. The surrounding Greek population at this period consisted of Ionians, who learnt script from these (hellenised) Phoenicians, and in turn made some changes to the system (μεταρρυθμίσαντες ὀλίγα); they called the letters Φοινικήια as, comments Herodotus, was only right, since the Phoenicians had introduced them.

Thus far, despite Herodotus' air of confidence, we are dealing with what appears to be an extremely speculative reconstruction, based partly on the legend of Phoenician settlement in Boeotia under Cadmus[57] and partly on the practice, attested in Ionic, Aeolic, and Doric Cretan inscriptions, of using the term Φοινικήια instead of γράμματα or στοιχεῖα.[58] Herodotus' theory may seem vulnerable to the objection that Greeks and Phoenicians came into contact in many other places besides Boeotia. Moreover, he has not explained why we should postulate a double modification of the original Phoenician system; we may conjecture that he thought the differences too considerable to allow a more economical hypothesis, or that he detected the operation of two distinct principles, but he has not told us in what the two systems differed. We are now, however, to be offered some remarkable archaeological corroboration of his theory: the dedications in 'Cadmean letters'[59] in the temple of Apollo Ismenius at Thebes (5.59–61):

εἶδον δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς Καδμήια γράμματα ἐν τῷ ἱρῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Ἰσμηνίου ἐν Θήβῃσι τῇσι Βοιωτῶν ἐπὶ τρίποσι τρισὶ ἐγκεκολαμμένα, τὰ πολλὰ ὅμοια ἐόντα τοῖσι Ἰωνικοῖσι. ὁ μὲν δὴ εἷς τῶν τριπόδων ἐπίγραμμα ἔχει·

Ἀμφιτρύων μ' ἀνέθηκεν ἐὼν ἀπὸ Τηλεβοάων.[60]

[55] For some alleged religious διδασκάλια cf. 2.49.3.

[56] Herodotus does not ascribe the invention of a writing-system to Cadmus; we do not know what views he held about the origins of script in general or of the Phoenician system in particular.

[57] The antiquity of Cadmus' connection with Phoenicia is debatable, and some have supposed that it originated with the logographers: see Latte, *RE* xx 1470 s.v. Kadmos (4), Gomme, *JHS* 33 (1913), 53ff., 223ff. Herodotus is in fact our earliest explicit witness (but cf. Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 21), though the manner in which he refers to Cadmus' Phoenician origins implies that the idea was familiar and, indeed, uncontroversial (cf. 2.49.3, 4.147.4). See further the judicious discussion by R. B. Edwards, *Kadmos the Phoenician* (Amsterdam, 1979), esp. 45ff.

[58] Ionic: φοινικήια *SIG*³ 38 B 37–8 (Meiggs–Lewis no. 30, from Teos, 480–50); further fragments are published by P. Herrmann, *Chiron* 11 (1981), 1–30, in which the new compound φοινικογραφέω (d 19–21) should be noted; Aeolic: φοινικόγραφος as the title of an official at Mytilene: *IG* xii. 2.96–7 (Hellenistic); Cretan: see L. H. Jeffery and A. Morpurgo-Davies, '*ΠΟΙΝΙΚΑΣΤΑΣ* and *ΠΟΙΝΙΚΑΖΕΝ*: BM 1969.4–2.1, a new archaic inscription from Crete', *Kadmos* 9 (1970), 118–54; their interpretation of ποινικάζειν and ποινικαστάς as verb and noun of agent from this root was called in question by A. J. Beattie, *Kadmos*, 14 (1975), 8–47, who proposed an etymology from ποινή, but his arguments are well rebutted by G. P. and R. B. Edwards, *Kadmos* 16 (1977), 131–40. Xenophon's φοινικιστής (*Anab.* 1.2.20) is best interpreted as 'scribe, secretary' (*pace* LSJ); see Lewis, *Sparta and Persia*, 25 n. 143; cf. Hsch. s.v. ἐκφοινίξαι.

[59] It is not clear whether this designation is Herodotus' own invention, nor whether it should be understood as 'Letters of Cadmus' or as 'Letters of the Cadmeans'.

[60] ἐών has often been suspected, but a convincing emendation has not been suggested.

ταῦτα ἡλικίην εἴη ἂν κατὰ Λάιον τὸν Λαβδάκου τοῦ Πολυδώρου τοῦ Κάδμου. ἕτερος δὲ τρίπους ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ τόνῳ λέγει·

Σκαῖος πυγμαχέων με ἑκηβόλῳ Ἀπόλλωνι
νικήσας ἀνέθηκε τεὶν περικαλλὲς ἄγαλμα.

Σκαῖος δ' ἂν εἴη ὁ Ἱπποκόωντος, εἰ δὴ οὗτός γε ἐστὶ ὁ ἀναθεὶς καὶ μὴ ἄλλος τὠυτὸ οὔνομα ἔχων τῷ Ἱπποκόωντος, ἡλικίην κατὰ Οἰδίπουν τὸν Λαΐου. τρίτος δὲ τρίπους λέγει καὶ οὗτος ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ·

Λαοδάμας τρίποδ' αὐτὸς ἐϋσκόπῳ Ἀπόλλωνι
μουναρχέων ἀνέθηκε τεὶν περικαλλὲς ἄγαλμα.

ἐπὶ τούτου δὴ τοῦ Λαοδάμαντος τοῦ Ἐτεοκλέος μουναρχέοντος ἐξανιστέαται Καδμεῖοι ὑπ' Ἀργείων καὶ τρέπονται ἐς τοὺς Ἐγχελέας, οἱ δὲ Γεφυραῖοι ὑπολειφθέντες ὕστερον ὑπὸ Βοιωτῶν ἀναχωρέουσι ἐς Ἀθήνας·

Though, as we have seen,[61] Herodotus knows that inscriptions can be forged, he does not consider the possibility that these lines might not go back to the days of the Labdacids. But it must be a long time since any serious enquirer was prepared to accept these inscriptions at face-value. Already in the first century Josephus says firmly that the Greeks could produce no evidence of literacy before the time of Homer, for all their grand claims to have learned writing from Cadmus and his Phoenicians.[62] Wolf, inaugurating the Homeric Question in its modern form, had no hesitation in denouncing these texts as post-Homeric compositions; his arguments may not now seem very cogent, but no-one will question his conclusion.[63]

There have, however, been some noteworthy attempts to save the phenomena. Some have argued that behind these Cadmean inscriptions lies a dim memory of Linear B.[64] Others have seen confirmation of Herodotus' account in the evidence of Oriental contacts afforded by the sensational discovery in 1963 of a deposit of Near Eastern cylinder-seals among the ruins of Mycenaean Thebes.[65] It has also been suggested that, though Herodotus was grossly in error about the date, he preserves, in a distorted form, a sound tradition that Boeotia was the cradle of the Greek alphabet – that is, the place where the transmission of Phoenician script occurred – or, more probably, the centre of its dissemination within mainland Greece. These views have been propounded with learning and ingenuity, but such attempts to save Herodotus' credit take us too far from what he actually says to be acceptable.

Though there may be room for some dispute as to whether the birth of the Greek alphabet should be dated as early as 1100, or about 750, not long before our first specimens, or somewhere in between,[66] no-one would seriously maintain that Herodotus

[61] 1.51.3–4: see above, p. 280.

[62] *Ap.* 1.10–12.

[63] F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (Halle, 1795), §55.

[64] Thus H. Biesantz, *Minoica: Festschrift J. Sundwall* (Berlin, 1958), 50–60.

[65] So, among others, N. G. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.*² (Oxford, 1967), 654, K. v. Fritz, *Die gr. Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin, 1967), Anm.-Bd. 212 n. 114. For an account of the discovery see E. Touloupa, *Kadmos* 3 (1964), 25ff.; a detailed study has been published by E. Porada, 'The cylinder seals found at Thebes in Boeotia' (with contributions by J. A. Brinkman and H. G. Güterbock), *AOF* 28 (1981/2), 1–78. One of the seals (conveniently illustrated in M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia Greca*, i. 45 fig. 2) bears the name of Kidin-Marduk, an official of the Kassite king Burnaburiash II, who ruled *c.* 1359–33; the Mycenaean pottery found in the vicinity of the seals cannot be much later than 1230.

[66] Some Semitic epigraphists favour a twelfth-century date: see J. Naveh, *AJA* 77 (1973), 1–8, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem, 1982), 175ff., F. M. Cross, *BASOR* 238 (1980), 1ff., E. Puech, *RBi* 90 (1983), 365–95 (esp. 391ff.); for a more moderate view see B. S. J. Isserlin, *CAH* iii² 1.816–18. In defence of a mid-eighth-century date see Jeffery *CAH* iii² 1.819ff., Heubeck, op. cit. 73ff.

could have seen Greek alphabetic inscriptions which had really been cut some generations before the Trojan War, and the lines commemorating the pious munificence of Amphitryon and Laodamas cannot be supposed to have been carved in the alleged donors' lifetimes. The case of the second inscription is rather different since, as Herodotus himself allows, there is no particular reason to associate it with a figure of the heroic age; certainly Scaeus the son of Hippocoon is not known to have had any connection with Thebes, and there is nothing against supposing that this dedication commemorates a homonymous archaic pugilist.

Dedicatory inscriptions are an early and obvious application for writing, and we need feel no surprise if the guardians of the Ismenion decided to add such dedications to objects traditionally associated with local heroes, not, probably, with any intention to deceive the visitor, but rather as the curator of a museum might attach informative labels to the objects in his charge. If the letter-forms of all three were similar and distinctive, we might infer either that all three were comparatively early or that the lettering of the first and third was modelled on that of Scaeus' dedication. 'Inusitata forma litterarum fecerat fidem' was Wolf's diagnosis: Herodotus, pre-conditioned by his belief in the extreme antiquity of the Greek alphabet, was misled by an early and unfamiliar style of Boeotian script.

Some may think that, given the significance of this material, he ought to have scrutinised it in a slightly more critical spirit; certainly it is a little disappointing that he does not think it noteworthy that already at this early date the Thebans were composing dedicatory inscriptions in hexameters and that the language had suffered so little change between Amphitryon's day and his own. Still, we are all liable to overlook awkward questions regarding evidence which apparently settles an argument in our favour, and should not be too ready to blame him if he failed to look this gift-horse in the mouth; more important, it might be judged, is his evident appreciation of the historical value of inscriptions.[67] Yet we may feel some disquiet about his argumentation if we consider what he may be supposed to have seen.

Nearly half a century ago Rhys Carpenter faced this challenge, and ventured to draw the Scaeus inscription as it would have appeared in archaic Boeotian script and dialect, apparently taking as his model the famous inscription of Mantiklos (*c.* 700–675);[68] surveying the result he noted that 'Save for the digamma, the unfamiliar form of lambda, the unexpected substitution of the psi-symbol for the chi, and the failure to distinguish the long vowels for E and O, he [sc. Herodotus] would have discovered little that was un-Ionic'.[69]

However, given the general drift of Herodotus' argument in these chapters, these differences are more serious than Rhys Carpenter allowed. Herodotus evidently thinks that the Cadmean script represents the first phase of modification postulated in his reconstruction; a halfway stage between Phoenician and Ionic lettering, embodying the changes which the Phoenician émigrés had introduced in adapting their native script to Greek; the Ionians learn this Cadmean script, modify it further, and then pass on the technique to other Greeks. But for this reconstruction to be reasonable, we should have to suppose that the lettering of the Cadmean dedications seemed to

[67] This appears to have been Tod's view (loc. cit. n. 1).

[68] 'Letters of Cadmus', *AJP* 56 (1935), 5ff.; Mantiklos inscription: Jeffery 90–1, Hansen *CEG* no. 326 (where further bibliography may be found).

[69] He does not comment on a further difficulty raised by his reconstruction, which presents the inscription running retrograde; this is what we should expect (see Jeffery 43ff.), but Herodotus' catalogue of the differences between Greek and Egyptian custom (2.36.4) shows that he was unaware that Greek script could run right to left.

Herodotus to resemble Ionic more closely than it did any other local Greek script with which he might be supposed to be familiar, including contemporary Boeotian script. Yet the divergences which Rhys Carpenter listed are considerable and obvious: what could Herodotus have regarded as the features peculiarly common to early Boeotian and Ionic script beside which these striking differences pale into insignificance? The gravity of this problem was not so apparent before the publication of Miss Jeffery's *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, which allows even those with no pretensions to epigraphic expertise to form a reasonably clear picture of the general appearance of archaic Ionic and Boeotian letter-forms and to compare them both with each other and with other local scripts. No support is to be found here for Herodotus' notion of a special relationship between early Boeotian script and Ionic.[70]

Other points may trouble us. The treatment of long *e* and *o* was an immediately obvious difference between archaic Boeotian script and Ionic. Herodotus could hardly have failed to draw the correct inference that *η* and *ω* were among the modifications introduced by the Ionians; but if, as his theory requires, the Ionians were the middlemen who transmitted the alphabet to the rest of the Greek world, he ought to have asked himself why other local scripts ignored *η* and *ω*. We may also note that comparison with actual Phoenician practice plays no part in his exposition, though the opportunity to inform himself on this matter ought not to have been beyond an enquirer who gathered his material as widely as Herodotus would have us believe he did; even if he was not specially interested in such questions at the time of his visit to Tyre (2.44),[71] he should at least have gained there a clearer general conception of Phoenician writing than most of his readers can have enjoyed, and we might have expected him to display this knowledge here, since it would have greatly strengthened his hand.

His argumentation, then, is odd, and even when we have allowed for a fundamental misconception regarding the date of these inscriptions, it is hard to see how he could in good faith have arrived at his conclusions from the evidence available to him. If he did not claim to have seen these dedications for himself, his reasoning would be defensible; we could then imagine that he had imposed too precise a sense on the words of an informant who, being himself familiar only (or primarily) with Ionic script, meant simply that he had no real difficulty in reading these inscriptions when he described them as *τὰ πολλὰ ὅμοια ἐόντα τοῖσι Ἰωνικοῖσι* (or words to that effect). Herodotus' situation may then be compared to that of an ornithologist invited to identify a bird described as rather like a sparrow with certain specific differences; in such a case the expert needs to discover whether the enquirer can recognise any other species of small birds besides sparrows if he is to arrive at a satisfactory identification. A nuthatch is more like a sparrow than a seagull or a magpie, and likewise archaic Boeotian script is more like Ionic than Phoenician or any other non-Greek writing-system; but it is another question whether either comparison is as helpful as it might be.

Autopsy is so much a matter of faith in Herodotean scholarship that it may be thought frivolous or irresponsible to advance the hypothesis that Herodotus has here been misled by hearsay evidence and that we should not believe that he had himself inspected these inscriptions. But there are other passages in his work where it is very hard to accept that he could have seen what he says he saw. The outstanding examples come from his account of Egypt, in particular the skeletal evidence for flying snakes (2.75) and the series of 345 wooden statues, representing successive high priests at

[70] See in particular the final comparative *Table of letters*.

[71] What he claims to have learnt there does not inspire confidence; cf. Fehling 88.

Thebes, which he adduces as tangible evidence for the fabulous antiquity of Egyptian civilisation (2.143).[72] I do not wish to suggest that there is little to choose between Herodotus and Baron Munchausen; no doubt he sincerely believed that these *Sehenswürdigkeiten* were there to be seen, and we perhaps do him an injustice by taking at face-value a use of the first person which may have been understood by his original audience as a literary convention without any necessary connection with the author's autobiography (as in a modern novel). But certainly the attempt to maintain the literal truth of his words here seems to entail the sacrifice of his common sense.

The origins of the Greek alphabet were undoubtedly a matter of topical interest.[73] Herodotus implies that some held the Greeks to have been literate before the time of Cadmus: γράμματα οὐκ ἐόντα πρὶν Ἕλλησι ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκέειν (5.58.1) indicates the existence of a contrary view. We may suspect that he has in mind Hecataeus, who, along with some other Milesian writers,[74] had derived Greek writing from Egyptian, the intermediary being Danaus, reckoned by some to belong to an earlier generation than Cadmus.[75] Others again, notably Stesichorus, Gorgias, and, on occasion, Euripides, favoured Palamedes;[76] the tragedian was, however, also prepared to allow Greek literacy before the Trojan War, as we may observe from the *Hippolytus*.[77] Sophocles, who both envisaged a literate Heracles in the *Trachiniae* and in the *Poimenes* spoke of φοινικίοις γράμμασι,[78] may be supposed, if he was more consistent than Euripides, to have shared Herodotus' views.

We can sympathise with Herodotus' wish to make a significant contribution to a current controversy,[79] but wishful thinking, it is to be feared, has turned an ingenious

[72] It is not difficult to account for Herodotus' belief that flying snakes were to be found in Egypt (see Lloyd *ad loc.*), but it is impossible to suggest what he might have seen that he could reasonably have mistaken for heaps of snake skeletons (σωροὶ . . . τῶν ἀκανθέων); snakes do not congregate to die; see further Fehling 20–3. Herodotus relates further odd encounters with bones on the battlefields of Pelusium and Papremis (3.12). The case against the 345 wooden statues is more complicated: see Fehling 59–65.

[73] On the Greeks' own views about the origins of writing see L. H. Jeffery, 'Ἀρχαῖα γράμματα', *Europa, Festschr. Ernst Grumach* (Berlin, 1967), 152ff., Heubeck, op. cit. 105ff.

[74] *FGrHist* 1 F 20, 9 F 3 (Anaximander), 687 F 1 (Dionysius of Miletus); all from the sch. on Dion. Thrac. p. 183, 1 (Hilgard). Given the differences between Greek and Egyptian writing, this view seems at first sight far-fetched. But certainly some centuries later what is now generally supposed to have been a Linear B tablet was submitted to an Egyptian priest for decipherment (Plut. *de gen. Soc.* c. 5 (577e–f)), and perhaps a similar find in the archaic age was taken as evidence that a script based on Egyptian hieroglyphic was formerly used in Boeotia. Prometheus' claim to have taught men writing (A. *PV* 460f.) is not relevant; though it implies the advent of literacy before Io (and therefore five generations before Danaus) the Titan need not be supposed to confine himself to the development of Greek civilisation.

[75] See Jacoby on Hecataeus *FGrHist* 1 F 20; but cf. Edwards, op. cit. 26ff., whose genealogical tables show that many thought them to be cousins.

[76] Stesich. fr. 213; Gorg. *Pal.* 30; E. fr. 578. It is not entirely easy to square Palamedes' claims to have invented writing with the mechanics of Odysseus' plot to destroy him (as related by Hygin. *fab.* 105; cf. [Apollod.] Vat. Epit. 3.8, probably following Euripides), involving as it did forged correspondence with Priam; see further *RE* xviii. 2501f. It would be interesting to know what those who held this view made of the σήματα λυγρά of *Il.* 6.168.

[77] Apart from Phaedra's letter (856ff.) two references to literature on mythological and religious topics should be noted (451, 954). Euripides exploited Theseus' literacy in the famous fragment in which an illiterate peasant describes the name written on the hero's sails (fr. 382) – in the Ionic alphabet, which was not to be officially adopted at Athens until after Euripides' death; similar conceits in Agathon F 4 (Snell) and Theodectas F 6 (Snell).

[78] *Tr.* 1166ff.; cf. 47 (if this is genuine), 157–8; F 514. Many suppose that the *Poimenes* can be dated to the 460s on the strength of *P. Oxy.* 2256 fr. 3. 4; 'sed res incertissima est' (Radt).

[79] H. Grassl, 'Herodot u. die griech. Schrift', *Hermes* 100 (1972), 169–75, suggests that this digression had a further topical relevance, inasmuch as Herodotus by adducing evidence that

but ill-founded speculation into what purports to be sober epigraphical scholarship.[80] The unease created by Herodotus' account of the Cadmean inscriptions will be increased when we come to consider the most important of his Oriental inscriptions, those relating to the Pharaoh Sesostris.

It is now time to turn eastwards. Most of Herodotus' foreign inscriptions are mentioned simply as curiosities, of interest for their association with the ruler to whom he credits them. In few cases do the interpretations offered inspire confidence, but we should remember that the odds were stacked against the earnest Greek enquirer: knowledge of cuneiform and hieroglyphic scripts was practically restricted to small professional groups, and a Greek curious to know the meaning of a Persian or Egyptian inscription was more than likely to fall victim to guesswork by natives anxious not to seem disobliging.

Lydian, however, was written alphabetically, its script being, indeed, perhaps derived from an East Greek alphabet, and though more than half the characters would have been unfamiliar to a Greek,[81] we may surmise that many Greeks could have made out proper names in a Lydian text – at all events, if they had a rough idea what to expect – much as we decipher proper names in the Cyrillic alphabet.[82] We shall therefore feel little surprise that a Lydian text in which the essential elements are 'Phrygia', 'Lydia' and 'Croesus' enjoys the rare distinction among Herodotus' Oriental inscriptions of raising no doubts or problems. This is Croesus' boundary-marker at the Lydian–Phrygian border (7.30.2):

ἐκ δὲ Κολοσσέων ὁ στρατὸς ὁρμώμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς οὔρους τῶν Φρυγῶν καὶ Λυδῶν ἀπίκετο ἐς Κύδραρα πόλιν, ἔνθα στήλη καταπεπηγυῖα, σταθεῖσα δὲ ὑπὸ Κροίσου, καταμηνύει διὰ γραμμάτων τοὺς οὔρους.

The stone is of little intrinsic interest, and Herodotus presumably decided to mention it because of its connection with the king whose downfall embodies so many themes of fundamental importance for the work as a whole.[83]

Herodotus' other contribution to Lydian epigraphy surely reflects a wild Greek surmise. Alyattes' tomb, he reports, bore pillars recording the contributions of the various groups who joined to construct the king's huge barrow (1.93.3):

the Ionians had been the first Greeks to take over the Phoenician script might be supposed to be offering his support to those who pressed for the adoption of the Ionic alphabet at Athens.

[80] This section finds an odd sequel in [Arist.] *Mir.* c. 133 (843b), where we are told of the unusual palaeographical expertise displayed by the guardians of the temple of Apollo Ismenius when they succeeded in deciphering as a dedication by Heracles an inscription from Hypata in Thessaly which had baffled local talent.

[81] The account of the Lydian alphabet in *RE* (xiii. 2157) adequately demonstrates this; for further details see R. Gusmani, *Lydisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1964), 28–9, *Ergänzungsbd.* (1980), i. 18. Most Lydian inscriptions belong to the fourth century; it would not be surprising if the proportion of unfamiliar letters was somewhat lower earlier.

[82] Given the close ties which had existed between Greece and Lydia in the sixth century, many Greeks might well have been able to do rather better than that, even in Herodotus' day; but one should be cautious in such estimates, in view of the notorious Greek aversion to learning foreign languages.

[83] It is strange that Herodotus seems not to consider the possibility of any link between Croesus and the fabulously rich Pythius, son of Atys, to whom he has just introduced us (27–9): Atys, we may recall, was the name of Croesus' heir apparent, who had married shortly before he was killed (1.34.3), and it is tempting to see in Pythius a grandson of Croesus (as was first suggested by L. Urlichs, *RhM* N.F. 10 (1856), 26–7), his name commemorating the king's dealings with Delphi. (The story is of course a doublet of the tale of Darius and Oeobazus (4.83–4) and ends with a rite (39) which Herodotus did not understand.)

οὗροι δὲ πέντε ἐόντες ἔτι καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἦσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ σήματος ἄνω, καί σφι γράμματα ἐνεκεκόλαπτο τὰ ἕκαστοι ἐξεργάσαντο. καὶ ἐφαίνετο μετρεόμενον τὸ τῶν παιδισκέων ἔργον ἐὸν μέγιστον.

This detail allows Herodotus to underline the strange Lydian custom of making girls collect their dowries by prostitution. Call-girls are again linked with splendid tombs in his account of the pyramids (2.126, 134); in this rather curious association of ideas we may discern the expression of that sturdy determination not be to overawed by the pomp and circumstance of an Oriental monarchy which meets us, in a rather more elevated form, in the story of Solon and Croesus (1.29 ff.).[84]

Even more unlikely are the inscriptions from the tomb of the (fabulous) Babylonian queen Nitocris, which rebuked Darius for his greed (1.187); these are simply part of the legend of Darius' avarice (3.89.3), and need not detain us.

Of the inscriptions which Herodotus ascribes to Darius himself, one has been discussed already, the stele erected at the Bosporus with Greek and cuneiform inscriptions (4.87.1–2).[85] Darius also left a monument to his sojourn at the River Tearus (4.91):

ἐπὶ τοῦτον ὦν τὸν ποταμὸν ἀπικόμενος ὁ Δαρεῖος ὡς ἐστρατοπεδεύσατο, ἡσθεὶς τῷ ποταμῷ στήλην ἔστησε καὶ ἐνθαῦτα, γράμματα ἐγγράψας λέγοντα τάδε· Τεάρου ποταμοῦ κεφαλαὶ ὕδωρ ἄριστόν τε καὶ κάλλιστον παρέχονται πάντων ποταμῶν· καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὰς ἀπίκετο ἐλαύνων ἐπὶ Σκύθας στρατὸν ἀνὴρ ἄριστός τε καὶ κάλλιστος πάντων ἀνθρώπων, Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεος, Περσέων τε καὶ πάσης τῆς ἠπείρου βασιλεύς.

The hydrographic prologue may be hard to swallow,[86] but the inscription on the Susa statue offers a partial parallel for the wish to advertise epigraphically the Persian presence in a distant land.[87] Near to the springs which appear to be Herodotus' Tearus bedding suitable for such a stele has been discovered, to add some slight archaeological confirmation, though we should not overrate its significance;[88] it will not help to settle the crucial question whether Herodotus' report of the inscription's content has a substratum of truth (if we discount the opening tribute to an area of outstanding natural beauty) or is merely guesswork by someone who seems to have had some idea of the formulae of Persian royal titulature.[89]

The third inscription credited to Darius is a rather different matter. Having recounted the ruse by which, with the co-operation of his groom Oebares, Darius had won the throne, Herodotus tells us of the relief which the king had constructed to commemorate his success (3.88.3):

[84] No trace of writing is reported on the broken remains of what appears to be one of these οὗροι: see G. Hanfmann, *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times* (Princeton, 1983), 56.

[85] See above pp. 281f.

[86] Particularly if the Persian king invariably drank the water of the R. Choaspes (1.188.1).

[87] On the Susa statue see above, n. 13.

[88] See E. Unger, 'Die Dariusstele am Tearos', *AA* 1915, 3–17. General Jochmus was told at Pinarhisar in 1847 that a stone with letters 'like nails' had stood there until fairly recently (*JRGS* 24 [1854], 43–4).

[89] See further J. Friedrich, *Die Welt als Geschichte* 2 (1936), 108. The main interest of this report lies in the hope which it inspires that Persian inscriptions may be found in the Balkans, a hope encouraged by the discovery at Gherla in Rumania of a clay-tablet apparently preserving the draft of a building inscription of Darius I; see J. Harmatta, *AAntHung* 2 (1954), 1–16, M. Mayrhofer, *Supplement zur Sammlung der altpersischen Inschriften* (Vienna, 1978), 16; it is of course possible that the tablet originated a very long way from the Transylvanian vegetable-garden where it was dug up.

πρῶτον μέν νυν τύπον ποιησάμενος λίθινον ἔστησε· ζῷον δέ οἱ ἐνῆν ἀνὴρ ἱππεύς, ἐπέγραψε δὲ γράμματα λέγοντα τάδε· Δαρεῖος ὁ Ὑστάσπεος σύν τε τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἀρετῇ (τὸ οὔνομα λέγων) καὶ Οἰβάρεος τοῦ ἱπποκόμου ἐκτήσατο τὴν Περσέων βασιληίην.

Whereas the two preceding Persian inscriptions were located with reasonable precision (as are most of Herodotus' inscriptions), we are given no indication of the location of this monument. Nor is Herodotus' interpretation credible: if Darius had circumvented the arrangements whereby the choice of ruler was to be left to heaven, he would not have broadcast his skullduggery;[90] but his whole account of the conspiracy which brought Darius to power bristles with so many blatant improbabilities that this conclusion will surprise no-one. It looks as if the story of Darius' ruse (together, no doubt, with much of the immediately preceding narrative) represents a Greek fantasy woven around a conspicuous monument without regard to its real purport; we may compare the tale of Sesostris' escape from attempted fratricide over the bodies of his children (2.107), in which, though no monument is mentioned, we should surely discern a misunderstanding of the iconographic convention which represents the victorious Pharaoh treading upon his defeated (and diminished) foes.[91] The extant remains of Achaemenid monumental art provide no parallel for the work here described,[92] though the material at our disposal is not so abundant that an argument from silence may be regarded as conclusive; but since we may reasonably doubt whether any Greek could have distinguished Persian art from that of other cultures using a cuneiform script, it would be rash to treat Herodotus' description as reliable evidence for Achaemenid art-history.

The preponderance of Egyptian texts among Herodotus' Oriental inscriptions is immediately striking. We might connect this with the intrinsic fascination of the hieroglyphic script, in which the pictographic element is so conspicuous as to raise the hope that it might yield a sense even to those who do not know the language.[93]

[90] Contrast Herodotus' summary of the Persian curriculum (1.136.2) ἱππεύειν καὶ τοξεύειν καὶ ἀληθίζεσθαι.

[91] So W. Spiegelberg, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit von Herodots Bericht über Ägypten im Lichte der ägyptischen Denkmäler* (Heidelberg, 1926), 25–6 (English translation by A. W. Blackman, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt in the Light of the Egyptian Monuments* [Oxford, 1927], 25). S. pointed out that Herodotus' account of Sethos (Sethon ?) (2.141), who was miraculously delivered from Sennacherib by small rodents with an appetite for leather, rests in part on a similar misunderstanding: the statue of a man holding a mouse (sacred to Horus of Letopolis and most likely marking the person depicted as that god's high priest) has given a strange turn to the tradition familiar to us from the Old Testament (ii *Kings* xix. 8ff.) of a divine visitation which confounded the apparently invincible Assyrian host. (Herodotus' version finds a curious parallel in Khotanese cult-legend: see (Sir) M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan* [Oxford, 1907], i.119–20.)

[92] The horse and rider motif is well documented on seals, coins, and luxury objects: see A. Farkas, 'The horse and rider in Achaemenid art', *Persica* 4 (1969), 57–76, M. C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art*, 129f. In an Aramaic letter, dated to the reign of Darius II, the satrap Aršāma orders a representation of a horse and its rider from a craftsman named Hinzani (see P. Grelot, *Documents araméens d'Égypte* [Paris, 1972], no. 70, pp. 318–19; G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford, 1957], Letter ix, pp. 32, 71–4), but, though it has often been assumed that Hinzani was a sculptor, there is no indication of the medium in which he worked, and he might have been a painter or seal-cutter: see M. Roaf, *Iran* 18 (1980), 72.

[93] Herodotus is not very informative about Egyptian writing. He tells us that there are two scripts, known as sacred and common (ἱρά and δημοτικά, 2.36.4), and describes the inscription on the Karabel relief, which he wrongly takes to be Egyptian (see below pp. 300ff.), as written in γράμματα ἱρὰ Αἰγύπτια; but he does not elaborate on the nature of the two writing systems and the differences between them. (He should of course have distinguished three scripts, hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic: see further Lloyd *ad loc.*)

None of Herodotus' renderings of Egyptian inscriptions win the credence of Egyptologists. Those which relate to Cheops, Asychis and Sethos need not detain us. But an important group are treated as corroborative evidence for 'the glory extreme of high Sesostris', supplementing the account which Herodotus claims to have gleaned from Egyptian sources.[94] The presence of a distinctive script far from home, on an object not easily movable, presents an obvious challenge to the historian even if he cannot read it; but Herodotus' argumentation shows a disturbing insouciance regarding the dangers involved in handling such evidence.

Sesostris' antecedents are to be sought in the dynamic pharaohs of Dynasty XII (*c.* 2000–1780), three of whom were called Senwosret/Sesostris;[95] the saga of their achievements, which included the consolidation of Egypt's hold on Nubia and an invasion of Syria, had no doubt been somewhat enhanced in native tradition during the subsequent millennium and a half. In Herodotus' survey of Egyptian history before Psammetichus (2.99–146) Sesostris is set, some five centuries too late, two generations before Proteus, the Trojan War Pharaoh. The sequence of this pre-Saite history and much of its content is presented as the tradition of the learned priests of Memphis,[96] though Herodotus occasionally supplements this basic account with his own observations and with stories which he says he was told elsewhere. Doubts (which I fully share) have been raised about the credentials of Herodotus' priestly sources,[97] but the validity of their orders is not material to my argument, since what concerns us here is his supplement to their account.

The priests, says Herodotus, related a remarkable campaign of conquest. After a successful naval expedition southward Sesostris led a great army northwards, marking his victories by commemorative stelae of a distinctive type (2.102.4–103.2):

ὁτέοισι μέν νυν αὐτῶν ἀλκίμοισι ἐνετύγχανε καὶ δεινῶς γλιχομένοισι τῆς ἐλευθερίης, τούτοισι μὲν στήλας ἐνίστη ἐς τὰς χώρας διὰ γραμμάτων λεγούσας τό τε ἑωυτοῦ οὔνομα καὶ τῆς πάτρης καὶ ὡς δυνάμι τῇ ἑωυτοῦ κατεστρέψατό σφεας· ὅτεων δὲ ἀμαχητὶ καὶ εὐπετέως παρέλαβε τὰς πόλιας, τούτοισι δὲ ἐνέγραφε ἐν τῇσι στήλῃσι κατὰ ταὐτὰ καὶ τοῖσι ἀνδρηίοισι τῶν ἐθνέων γενομένοισι καὶ δὴ καὶ αἰδοῖα γυναικὸς προσενέγραφε, δῆλα βουλόμενος ποιέειν ὡς εἶηταν ἀνάλκιδες. ταῦτα δὲ ποιέων διεξήιε τὴν ἤπειρον, ἐς ὃ ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίης ἐς τὴν Εὐρώπην διαβὰς τούς τε Σκύθας κατεστρέψατο καὶ τοὺς Θρήικας. ἐς τούτους δέ μοι δοκέει καὶ προσώτατα ἀπικέσθαι ὁ Αἰγύπτιος στρατός. ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ τούτων χώρῃ φαίνονται σταθεῖσαι στῆλαι, τὸ δὲ προσωτέρω τούτων οὐκέτι.

[94] My discussion of Herodotus' account of Sesostris is heavily indebted to Fehling (esp. 15–17, 98–101) and to the important article by O. K. Armayor, 'Sesostris and Herodotus' autopsy of Thrace, Colchis, inland Asia Minor, and the Levant', *HSCP* 84 (1980), 53–74.

[95] See further A. B. Lloyd, 'Nationalist propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt', *Historia* 31 (1982), 33ff. (esp. 37–40); however, Lloyd seems to me to assume too readily that Herodotus faithfully mirrors Egyptian tradition at all points.

[96] Herodotus takes pains to stress that these chapters form a continuous and unitary account: note the repeated *ἔλεγον* (both with and without *οἱ ἱρέες*) at 2.99.2, 100.1, 101.1, 102.2, 107.1, 109.1, 111.1, 112.1, 113.1, 116.1, 118.1, 120.1, 121.1, 122.1, 124.1, 127.1, 129.1, 136.1, 139.1.

[97] The question is discussed by Lloyd, *Introduction* 89–114, who does not regard the obvious historical ignorance of Herodotus' informants as grounds for denying them clerical status, or even for adopting the compromise favoured by, among others, Spiegelberg, that Herodotus tended to mistake the verger for the Dean. But a more serious objection lies in their religious ignorance, well exemplified in the moving story of Mycerinus, which is largely based on misunderstanding of rituals in honour of Osiris (129.3–130, 132–133), raising the further question of what sort of priests ever professed to serve gods who punish a just king for his just dealing. See further Fehling 54ff.

Scythia and Thrace (in that order, apparently) mark the northern limits of Sesostris' conquests. These lands lie far beyond the horizons of those Egyptians whose writings have been preserved to us, and we must doubt whether any Egyptian in Herodotus' day could have been so specific;[98] at best we must suppose that the historian is imposing a precise sense on a vaguer claim that Sesostris' conquests surpassed those of Darius (cf. 110.2–3).

If we ask how Herodotus was so sure that Sesostris, having come so far, did not lead his armies even further, into Germany, maybe, or Turkestan, the answer is plain: beyond Thrace (and Scythia) the distinctive Sesostrian stelae are not to be found: ἐς τούτους δέ μοι δοκέει καὶ προσώτατα ἀπικέσθαι ὁ Αἰγύπτιος στράτος· ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ τούτων χώρῃ φαίνονται σταθεῖσαι στῆλαι, τὸ δὲ προσωτέρω τούτων οὐκέτι. We naturally suppose that Herodotus here supplements the priestly traditions of Memphis with archaeological evidence independently observed,[99] whether he had himself seen these stelae (as we might infer on the strength of the principle stated at 2.99)[100] or depended on the report of a witness whom he regarded as reliable, and it is disconcerting to find that what appears to be the natural interpretation of this passage is practically contradicted a few chapters later (2.106.1), where we are told that most of Sesostris' stelae had perished by Herodotus' day, so that we must infer that his information as to their original locations cannot rest on contemporary observation.

Resisting the temptation to speculate as to what could have prompted the notion that Egyptian monuments were once to be seen in Bulgaria and South Russia,[101] we should note a serious weakness in Herodotus' argument which has received surprisingly little attention, scholars having apparently been content to observe that the premises are false. A negative generalisation such as this could only be established by a systematic survey of the areas bordering on Thrace and Scythia, which could in any case only show what was currently visible, and would not determine whether Sesostrian stelae had stood there in the past. Even if we suppose that Herodotus took it for granted that it was possible to identify a few key-locations where Sesostris would have erected stelae had he ever been there (a considerable assumption),[102] so that a

[98] Tacitus, in his account of the origins of Serapis (*Hist.* 4.83), notes that even in the Hellenistic age Egyptian priests knew little of foreign parts, with particular reference to their ignorance of the Black Sea area ('Ponti et externorum parum gnaris') – practically the only point in this *Königsnovelle* to inspire confidence.

[99] 'Herodotus seems to be referring to actual monuments in Thrace, but unluckily he does not say what they were; the conclusion he bases on them is obviously false, but this does not prove that he had not seen them' (How and Wells).

[100] Μέχρι μὲν τούτου ὄψις τε ἐμὴ καὶ γνώμη καὶ ἱστορίη ταῦτα λέγουσά ἐστι, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε Αἰγυπτίους ἔρχομαι λόγους ἐρέων κατὰ τὰ ἤκουον· προσέσται δέ τι αὐτοῖσι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὄψιος. It should be noted that this last clause upsets the balance of the sentence and badly obscures the distinction drawn in its earlier part; the same expression recurs at 2.147.1, where it is perfectly in order. I wonder if it was added here by a scribe who observed that Herodotus did not in fact confine himself to the traditions of the native priesthood.

[101] Though a Greek traveller already convinced that Sesostris had passed that way might have persuaded himself that among the numerous megalithic monuments of south-eastern Bulgaria were weathered Egyptian stelae, I suspect the answer to this enigma lies not in archaeology but in lost literature. Since the origins of Colchis, which Herodotus regards as Sesostris' foundation (2.103.2–105), were relevant to the saga of the Argonauts, I wonder whether Herodotus here develops something drawn from Hecataeus, who dealt with the Argonauts in his *Genealogies* (*FGrHist* 1 F 17, 18) – perhaps combining Hecataean speculation with Egyptological information derived from elsewhere.

[102] Did Herodotus imagine that Sesostris' next advance would have taken him into Greece, so that the lack of any evidence of his presence along the route leading via Tempe to Thermopylae could be deemed a strong argument from silence?

quick check was feasible, nearly nine centuries had elapsed between what Herodotus regards as the period of Sesostris and his own day, and there was no reason why the defeated should lovingly cherish monuments to their humiliation after the departure of the Egyptian invaders,[103] particularly when those monuments might serve a useful purpose as building stone; the absence of Sesostrian stelae thus proves nothing.

We have not yet finished with Sesostris' stelae. Herodotus now tells us that, though most of these monuments are no longer visible, he had himself seen some in Palestine, complete with the emblems which branded as cowards the people in whose land they stood (2.106.1):

τὰς δὲ στήλας τὰς ἴστα κατὰ τὰς χώρας ὁ Αἰγύπτου βασιλεὺς Σέσωστρις, αἱ μὲν πλεῦνες οὐκέτι φαίνονται περιεοῦσαι, ἐν δὲ τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ Συρίῃ αὐτὸς ὥρων ἐούσας καὶ τὰ γράμματα τὰ εἰρημένα ἐνεόντα καὶ γυναικὸς αἰδοῖα.

Though more precise topographical detail would be welcome, Herodotus has usually been supposed to refer to the Egyptian monuments cut in the limestone rock at the main crossing of the Nahr el Kelb a little north of Beirut, on one of which the name of Rameses II could at one time be read, though no serious scholar appears to have found on them anything like female *αἰδοῖα*.[104] It need hardly be said that Egyptian epigraphy offers no parallel to this noteworthy addition to the conventional elements of a victory inscription, but it should not surprise us if ingenious minds before Herodotus' time had seen an obscene significance in incomprehensible symbols and constructed a story to fit.

We should note the confident assurance with which Herodotus credits the Syrian stelae to Sesostris; his grounds may seem to us inadequate. He could not have found anyone on the spot who might plausibly have claimed expertise in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics, nor would the presence of a sign which might be interpreted as female *αἰδοῖα* be sufficient to establish the attribution, since others might have emulated Sesostris' practice. He must have assumed that no Egyptian king after Sesostris led an army as far north as Syria; he evidently supposed that his information about Egyptian history covered all points of major interest and that, since he had not heard of any other northward ventures, he could fairly assume that there were none. Few of us would think this inference *ex silentio* sensible, even allowing for Herodotus' premise (which no modern scholar would accept) that his sources were comprehensively informed; from the Egyptian point of view Syria was a modest military objective compared with Thrace or Scythia, and it would have been natural for an Egyptian informant to pass over relatively unambitious campaigns by later Pharaohs which would have seemed an anticlimax after the far-reaching triumphs of Sesostris.

The rest of the chapter deals with a monument which has been recognised since the middle of the last century to be not Egyptian but Hittite (2.106.2–5):

εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ περὶ Ἰωνίην δύο τύποι ἐν πέτρῃσι ἐγκεκολαμμένοι τούτου τοῦ ἀνδρός, τῇ τε ἐκ τῆς Ἐφεσίης ἐς Φώκαιαν ἔρχονται καὶ τῇ ἐκ Σαρδίων ἐς Σμύρνην. ἑκατέρωθι δὲ ἀνὴρ ἐγγέγλυπται μέγαθος πέμπτης σπιθαμῆς, τῇ μὲν δεξιῇ χειρὶ

[103] Sesostris' campaign is seen as an isolated expedition; though he brings home some prisoners (2.107.1; 108.1), he makes no attempt to consolidate his conquests.

[104] On the Egyptian reliefs from Nahr-el-Kelb see F. H. Weissbach, *Die Denkmäler u. Inschriften an der Mündung des Nahr-el-Kelb* (Berlin u. Leipzig, 1922), 17–22. There are other possibilities, such as the commemorative stelae of Seti I and Rameses II from Beth-Shan and the fragment of a monumental stele from Megiddo bearing the name of Sheshonk I: see J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*[3] (Princeton, 1969), 253–5, 263–4.

ἔχων αἰχμήν, τῇ δὲ ἀριστερῇ τόξα, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην σκευὴν ὡσαύτως· καὶ γὰρ Αἰγυπτίην καὶ Αἰθιοπίδα ἔχει· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ὦμου ἐς τὸν ἕτερον ὦμον διὰ τῶν στηθέων γράμματα ἱρὰ Αἰγύπτια διήκει ἐγκεκολαμμένα, λέγοντα τάδε· ἐγὼ τήνδε τὴν χώρην ὤμοισι τοῖσι ἐμοῖσι ἐκτησάμην. ὅστις δὲ καὶ ὁκόθεν ἐστί, ἐνθαῦτα μὲν οὐ δηλοῖ, ἑτέρωθι δὲ δεδήλωκε. τὰ δὴ καὶ μετεξέτεροι τῶν θεησαμένων Μέμνονος εἰκόνα εἰκάζουσί μιν εἶναι, πολλὸν τῆς ἀληθείης ἀπολελειμμένοι.

Herodotus here describes the well-known reliefs of the Karabel pass, which depict a Hittite war-god of extremely un-Egyptian appearance.[105]

The precision of the topographical detail (as with the dedication on the Acropolis (5.77)[106]) gives an impression of accurate observation, but in fact presents grave difficulties. The carvings do not stand, as he says, on two different roads, but on opposite sides of the same road. His conception of the road-system itself is strange: the road from Sardis to Smyrna does not run through the Karabel gorge but four miles north of it, and the natural route from Ephesus to Phocaea would be through Smyrna.[107] Moreover, Herodotus' description differs in some important respects, most notably as regards the position of the inscription, from the better preserved of the two monuments; the other is too defective to allow a comparison, but he implies that they were substantially identical and we have no reason to think otherwise. To those who have studied these reliefs at first hand it has seemed overwhelmingly probable that Herodotus, despite the assured manner of his account, cannot have seen them himself. This may not, at first sight, appear too serious; Herodotus does not claim to have inspected the site personally, and though it was considerably nearer home than the monuments in Syria to which he devotes the preceding sentence (let alone Colchis or Egyptian Thebes), he could hardly be expected to visit the manifold wonders of the ancient Near East in the systematic way that Pevsner tackled the buildings of England. But, granted that his account is second-hand (whether based on hearsay or, less probably, on his reading), it is difficult to avoid the inference that either he was rather uncritical in dealing with an informant blessed with a lively imagination or he added something *de suo*. The most disturbing feature of his account is the inscription on the monument, which does not run, as he says, from shoulder to shoulder, but stands in the field to the right of the head. The discrepancy is significant, because Herodotus' interpretation depends on the position of the text. It is not, of course, written in Egyptian but in Hittite hieroglyphic, which is very different in appearance from Egyptian hieroglyphic, though likewise, for the most part, obviously pictographic.[108] While no-one familiar with the one script could mistake it for the other, from a brief description it would be very hard to tell which was meant.

If Herodotus had seen even a fraction of the Egyptian monuments he claims to have done, he could never have supposed the Karabel reliefs to be Egyptian had he actually visited the site; but it is understandable that, being merely told of them, he should have inferred Egyptian provenance from the presence of pictograms: the inference,

[105] For detailed discussion of this monument see J. M. Cook, 'The reliefs of "Sesostris" in Ionia', *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* vi. 2 (1956), 59–65, K. Bittel, 'Karabel', *MDOG* 98 (1967), 5–23; there is a good photograph in J. G. Macqueen, *The Hittites and their Contemporaries in Asia Minor* (London, 1975), Plate 4.

[106] Above, pp. 283–5.

[107] 'It is certain that neither the road from Smyrna to Sardis, nor that from Ephesus to Phocaea could have gone through this pass, which is very far from the proper track' observed Sir William Ramsay, *JHS* 2 (1882), 53; see further Armayor, op. cit. 69ff.

[108] On hieroglyphic Hittite see O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*[2] (Harmondsworth, 1980), 128ff., Plate 26, Macqueen, op. cit. 23ff.

though wrong, would be sensible. But the easy confidence with which a translation of the inscription is offered is disturbing. We feel no surprise that Egyptian guides were ready with ingenious renderings of hieroglyphic inscriptions from Egyptian monuments,[109] nor would it be strange if their Anatolian counterparts showed equal facility in dealing with the texts incised by their forefathers. But the presence in the vicinity of Smyrna of anyone competent to decipher an Egyptian inscription ought to have struck Herodotus as decidedly noteworthy. We should in any case hesitate to suppose that the interpretation offered was concocted by a quick-witted native on the spot, since it is based on a false idea of the text's position.

We do not know whether Herodotus was the first to identify the Karabel figure as Sesostris.[110] We may note his confident rejection of an alternative candidate (2.106.5): *τὰ δὴ καὶ μετεξέτεροι τῶν θεηταμένων Μέμνονος εἰκόνα εἰκάζουσί μιν εἶναι, πολλὸν τῆς ἀληθείης ἀπολελειμμένοι*; we might doubt whether his dogmatism is justified, since this strange victory-inscription bears no name, though *ὅστις δὲ καὶ ὁκόθεν ἐστί, ἐνθαῦτα μὲν οὐ δηλοῖ, ἑτέρωθι δὲ δεδήλωκε. ἑτέρωθι* might, I suppose, refer to the stelae described above, but the assumption of any connection between these very different and widely separated monuments is arbitrary and the argument circular.[111] We can, I think, divine how Herodotus' mind worked here from his description of the figure's equipment as Egyptian and Ethiopian. The Ethiopian element was surely suggested by the alternative interpretation of the relief as a representation of Memnon, while the pictographic script appeared to imply Egyptian affinities; the combination suits Herodotus' view of Sesostris as the only Egyptian king to rule Ethiopia (2.110.1).

We may admire Herodotus' combinatory ingenuity; but we have seen how weak is the chain of inference on which his narrative of Sesostris' conquests depends. Its reassuring air of coherence undoubtedly derives in part from the illusion of autopsy; though Herodotus does not claim in plain terms to have seen either the Thracian stelae or the Karabel monument, his authoritative manner creates the presumption that he speaks of what he has himself observed. What we have seen of his procedure here should make us cautious in dealing with other passages which give the impression of first-hand observation, where we have no such control.

We must now attempt to sum up. We may start with a numerical point: Herodotus cites as many Oriental inscriptions as Greek. This apparently even-handed approach is the more noteworthy in view of the vastly greater number of accessible Greek inscriptions relevant to his theme. He was evidently just as happy with texts whose meaning he had to take on trust as with those which he might himself verify. That he was relatively indifferent to such considerations is also suggested by his failure to distinguish those which he had himself inspected from those of which he knew only from hearsay. His account of the serpent-column, a monument of central relevance to his theme, is inaccurate and perfunctory; he misrepresents the first of the three Thermopylae epigrams he quotes; the only Greek prose inscription to be reported *verbatim*, Themistocles' propaganda, inspires no confidence.

He seldom appears to treat inscriptions as sources, but where he does use epigraphic evidence to support a historical argument, as with the Cadmean dedications and the

[109] 2.125.6; 136.4; 141.6.

[110] Bergk introduced Sesostris by conjecture in Hipponax fr. 42: an ingenious guess, but far from certain.

[111] We shall not have to look far for a parallel: compare the blatantly circular chronological argument employed against the attribution of Mycerinus' pyramid to the courtesan Rhodopis (2.134.2–3).

Sesostrian inscriptions, his procedure is insufficiently rigorous; in neither case is the monumental evidence what he supposed it to be, and reasonably careful inspection would have shown that it did not provide an adequate foundation for his conclusions. The confident assurance of his historical reconstructions is bluff; though we may admire his fertility in speculation, he has quite failed to consider whether the conclusions which he draws from the epigraphic data represent the only, or the most probable, way of accounting for the facts.

The inadequacies of his argumentation may well be a matter of period rather than personality. Certainly we find rather similar procedures in the early Hippocratic writings: the writer of the treatise *On the Sacred Disease* advances his own theories about the causes and cures of epilepsy and about the internal functioning of the body with the confident rationalism of a Victorian scientist confuting a literal interpretation of the opening chapters of *Genesis*, but his own account rests on notions which are highly speculative and at times downright imaginary.[112]

It is, I believe, significant that in both the cases where Herodotus explicitly argues from epigraphic evidence he is dealing with the period before the Trojan War, which he professes (though not entirely consistently) to regard as outside the limits of reliable tradition (1.5.3; 3.122.2).[113] So far as more recent history is concerned, he gives the impression of setting relatively little store by inscriptions; he reports them because they are in some way curious or because, as with the epigrams commemorating the Athenian victory over Boeotia and Chalcis and the fighting at Thermopylae, they add a certain formal grandeur to his narrative. His epigraphical studies appear to have been more for ornament than for use.[114]

We may, however, suspect that his information derives from inscriptions more often than he admits. Many of the offerings which he describes must have been provided with dedicatory inscriptions; epitaphs must often have honoured the dead whose graves were brought to his attention. When he tells us (7.224.1) that he ascertained the names of all the three hundred who died with Leonidas, it is natural to take him to mean that he learnt them from oral tradition. Yet we know from Pausanias (3.14.1) that beside the grave of Leonidas, whose bones were removed to Sparta in 440, was a stele giving the names and patronymics of the three hundred, and it is hard to believe that Herodotus, if he had been to Sparta, knew nothing of this monument. But undoubtedly there is more imaginative appeal in the idea that the names of the heroic dead remain alive on men's lips.[115] We may note that Herodotus nowhere cites an inscription as the source for any of the treaties and public documents mentioned in his work; here again we might wonder whether he has perhaps at times tacitly exploited the epigraphic record. It is, of course, difficult to feel certain about this in any particular case, if only because an inscription may well serve to keep an oral

[112] See further G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge, 1979), 15ff., 86ff.

[113] Egypt is clearly treated as a special case, on account of the Egyptians' own care to preserve knowledge of the past: cf. 2.77.1: *αὐτῶν δὲ δὴ Αἰγυπτίων οἱ μὲν περὶ τὴν cπειρομένην Αἴγυπτον οἰκέουcι, μνήμην ἀνθρώπων πάντων ἐπαcκέοντες μάλιcτα λογιώτατοί εἰcι μακρῷ τῶν ἐγὼ ἐc διάπειραν ἀπικόμην*. See further W. M. von Leyden, 'Spatium historicum', *DUJ* n.s. 11 (1949–50), 89–104 (= *Herodot: eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung* ed. W. Marg [Darmstadt, 1962], 169–81).

[114] From this I believe it follows that we should be wary of arguments from Herodotus' silence where inscriptions are involved (as, for instance, from his evident ignorance of the archon-list, publicly displayed from *c.* 425).

[115] For a rather different view of the relationship between Herodotus' account and the inscription recorded by Pausanias see Fehling 124.

tradition alive.[116] But overall it seems reasonably clear that Herodotus is reluctant to cite inscriptions, or any other form of non-poetic written record, as the source of information which might fall within the range of oral tradition.

It is difficult altogether to escape the impression of something disingenuous in Herodotus' use of inscriptions, and though his preference for colourful and persuasive presentation over objective and critical enquiry may stand out with unusual clarity in relation to this severely technical branch of scholarship, I do not believe, nor would it be *a priori* probable, that his handling of inscriptions is somehow atypical of his methods in general. This may be thought unkind. But there is, I believe, another side to the matter, to which insufficient attention has been given, and if the following paragraph seems to be characterised by that meretricious dogmatism which I regard as a defect in Herodotus, I must ask the reader to accept that it is intended merely as a very summary outline of a topic which I hope to explore in greater detail elsewhere.

The significance of Herodotus' generally acknowledged belief in the paramountcy of oral tradition has seldom been fully recognised, being usually treated as if it simply affected his choice of sources. There is, however, another aspect, and one much more difficult for us to grasp. Just as his leisurely and lucid style reflects the practice of an oral narrator, so his outlook belongs in many respects to a society in which literacy is simply an aid to oral communication.[117] This may seem paradoxical: for Herodotus' contemporaries the origins of the Greek alphabet were, as we have seen, shrouded in the mists of antiquity, and, even at the most conservative estimate, some Greeks had mastered the technique of alphabetic script three centuries before Herodotus set to work. But we undoubtedly tend to underestimate the length of time needed to move from mastery of writing by a few to widespread fluency in reading. Books were certainly not among life's *Selbstverständlichkeiten* in Herodotus' day, and Plato's strictures on literacy (*Phdr.* 274–5), reminiscent as they are of a not uncommon attitude to television, unmistakably imply that he grew up in a culture still predominantly oral. To appreciate the thought-ways of an oral culture an effort of imagination is not enough: we need to look to those who have studied contemporary preliterate societies.[118] They have shown how much less importance an oral culture attaches to logic and accuracy than does a literate one, how fluid its traditions are and how subject to adjustment in accordance with contemporary realities, and how slow the unlettered may be to appreciate the advantages of crystallising their traditions in a written form.[119] 'The pastness of the past...depends on a historical sensibility which can

[116] The difficulty of properly delimiting the respective contributions of oral tradition and epigraphic evidence emerges clearly in the interesting article by B. Virgilio, 'Atleti in Erodoto: tradizione orale e (possibile) tradizione epigrafica', *RIL* 106 (1972), 451–68.

[117] Discussion of the diffusion of literacy in Greece owes much to E. A. Havelock: see, in particular, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963), *Prologue to Greek Literacy* (Univ. of Cincinnati, 1971), *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982).

[118] See, by way of introduction, J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), esp. J. Goody and I. Watt, 'The consequences of literacy', 27–68, D. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford, 1974), *Oral Historiography* (London, New York and Lagos, 1982), esp. 1–22, 80–105, W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London, 1982).

[119] Goody well illustrates this last point with the Tiv genealogies from Nigeria (even more relevant to the study of Homer and Hesiod than to Herodotus). These stretch back some twelve generations to an eponymous ancestor, and serve as mnemonics for systems of social relations. At the turn of the century they were recorded by the British administration, but forty years later these written pedigrees occasioned considerable dissension: 'the Tiv maintained that they were incorrect, while the officials regarded them as statements of fact, as records of what actually happened, and could not agree that the unlettered indigenes could be better informed about the past than their own literate predecessors'.

hardly begin to operate without permanent written records.'[120] It may seem eccentric to suggest that fieldwork among the traditional societies of the Third World has much bearing on Herodotus' historiographical principles,[121] but I believe that he is influenced to a greater degree than has been generally appreciated by the habits of mind characteristic of oral literature. If he set supreme value on composing a narrative which would leave an abiding impression on the minds of a listening audience, both in his own lifetime and, as the composition of a written record would allow, thereafter, while failing to attach what we should regard as due weight to objective enquiry and rigorous argument, we ought to allow that there were good reasons why his priorities were not ours.

'Grave-stones tell truth scarce fourty years... Five languages secured not the epitaph of Gordianus': Simonides, to judge by his noble lines on the impermanence of letters incised on stone or bronze, shared Sir Thomas Browne's sense that the labours of the monumental mason offer no insurance against the iniquity of oblivion;[122] literature does.

> 'Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
> Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
> And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse
> When all the breathers of this work are dead;
> You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
> Where breath most breathes, – even in the mouths of men.'[123]

This is poetic commonplace; Herodotus appears innovatory in attempting to perpetuate the memory of great achievement in prose. If he seems offhand in his approach to epigraphy, we should remember that from his point of view inscriptions had their limitations: such inanimate, and indeed at times deceptive, testimony was merely peripheral to the great heritage of living tradition.*

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[120] Goody, op. cit. 34.

[121] However, even for those who hold a more conventional view of Herodotus' conception of his task consideration of the various hazards to be encountered by modern researchers in African history (on which see Henige, *Oral Historiography* passim) should demonstrate that the exploitation of oral tradition is not the straightforward matter that some Herodotean scholars appear to suppose.

[122] *Hydriotaphia* ch. 5 (the five languages being Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Egyptian and Arabic); Simon. *PMG* 581 (quoted *ad init.*).

[123] Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 81.

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