

NIKIAS, EPIMENIDES AND THE QUESTION OF OMISSIONS IN THUCYDIDES

Our starting point is a somewhat obscure incident which has lately attracted some attention. The year is 429 B.C., and the place is Athens in the third year of the Peloponnesian war. The plague, which had broken out only a year before, was still claiming its victims. Yet military operations were in full swing, and the general Phormio operating in the Corinthian gulf against a Peloponnesian fleet was able to score an impressive victory. The Lacedaemonians were deeply dissatisfied. This was the first sea-fight they had been engaged in, and they found it hard to believe that their fleet was so much inferior to that of the Athenians. They dispatched three advisers to Knemos, the admiral in charge, instructing them to make better preparations for another sea-fight. Additional ships were solicited from the allies, and those already at hand were prepared for battle. It is at this point that the incident in question occurred. Not to prejudice the issue, I quote the text in full leaving the controversial phrases untranslated:

4. And Phormio on his part sent messengers to Athens to give information of the enemy's preparations and to tell about the battle which they had won, urging them also to send to him speedily (*διὰ τάχους*) as many ships as possible, since there was always a prospect that a battle might be fought any day.

5. So they sent him twenty ships, but gave *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* special orders to sail first to Crete. *Νικίας γὰρ Κρής Γορτύνιος πρόξενος ὢν* persuaded them (*αὐτούς*) to sail against Cydonia, a hostile town, promising to bring it over to the Athenians; but he was really asking them to intervene to gratify the people of Polichne, who are neighbours of the Cydonians.

6. So *ὁ μὲν λαβὼν τὰς ναῦς*, went to Crete, and helped the Polichnitans to ravage the lands of the Cydonians, and by reason of winds and stress of weather wasted not a little time.

(Thuc. 2.85.4–6, Loeb trans.)

It is important to stress at the outset that there are in the transmitted manuscripts no signs of textual corruption. Modern scholars, however, have found the passage difficult and sometimes suggested emendations. The discussions have centred around three closely interrelated questions: (1) Does *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* in section 5 refer to *Νικίας* in the following sequence, or to a different person? And how are *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* and *Νικίας* related to *ὁ μὲν λαβὼν* in section 6? (2) Is *Νικίας* indeed a Cretan from Gortyn and a *proxenos* of the Athenians? (3) If *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* and *ὁ μὲν λαβὼν* refer to a person other than *Nikias* of Gortyn, why does Thucydides not name him?

According to the traditional and, one must stress, majority view, *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* and *ὁ μὲν λαβὼν* refer to a man different from *Nikias* the Gortynian. It is assumed that the terms imply an Athenian commander sent by the Assembly first to Crete and then to Phormio with the twenty ships. Scholars such as Classen, Busolt, and Gomme did not think this to be unusual. Indeed, there is nothing in the grammar to exclude such an interpretation. The terms are accordingly rendered by the phrase 'the commander in charge', that is, of the twenty ships.

It was W. R. Connor who, in a short but provocative article¹ suggested that *τῷ δὲ*

I am grateful to Paul Cartledge, Peter Garnsey, Frank Walbank and the Editors for helpful advice and criticism.

¹ W. R. Connor, 'Nicias the Cretan?', *AJAH* 1 (1976), 61–4.

κομίζοντι should be taken to refer to Nikias. 'This is surely the natural reading of the Greek', he claimed, being fully aware of the new meaning thereby injected into the text. Connor's reading implies that, apart from Phormio, only *one* person figures in the entire passage, Nikias of Gortyn; that, in other words, 'the Athenian *proxenos* was in charge of at least one part of the mission.' But since a similar practice is unparalleled in Thucydides, Connor was driven to propose an emendation. This proposal brings us to the second question.

Again, until Connor no scholar seems to have found Nikias problematic. Nikias was taken to be a Gortynian *proxenos* of Athens. Cobet in the nineteenth century proposed removing *Kres* from the text taking it, with dubious justification, to be a gloss on *Gortynios*.² Connor accepted this suggestion and added one of his own. Since Thucydides' normal practice 'is to specify the city whose interests a *proxenos* represents, even when the city is Athens', he suspected a further corruption. And since it is easier to assume that something went wrong with *Gortynios* rather than that an expression such as τῶν Ἀθηναίων or τῆς πόλεως had dropped out of the text, he suggested a change of one or two letters, turning Γορτύνιος into Γορτυνίους or, still better, Γορτυνίων: Νικίας γὰρ Γορτυνίων πρόξενος ὦν.

The consequence of this chain of argumentation is that instead of a Gortynian *proxenos* of Athens we get an Athenian *proxenos* of Gortyn, and none other than the famous Athenian general, Nikias son of Nikeratos. Nikias thus makes in this passage (i.e. 2.85) his first appearance in Thucydides' history, and not, as normally thought, in 3.51. As Connor was right to point out, this fits in with some further evidence which implies that Nikias had traditional connexions with Crete. I shall discuss the value of this evidence later.

Connor's views have not won a wide acceptance; rather they seem now to be totally rejected. The scholarly world seems on the whole to be satisfied with the conventional explanation, leaving the answer to the third question open. It would be worthwhile nonetheless citing some of the arguments brought against Connor. For, although some seem to be blind alleys, others have helped to elucidate issues and to gain insights that contribute to the solution I would like to propose.

The first scholar to react, M. B. Walbank, recognized the major difficulty inherent in Connor's thesis.³ Not only does Connor propose profoundly to modify a text which is *prima facie* uncorrupted, but also his changes 'require acceptance of the hypothesis that two separate levels of corruption existed in the passage' – that is, the superfluous *Κρῆς* and the nominative singular *Γορτύνιος* instead of the genitive (or dative) plural. As this important point has been re-stated in one way or another by most of Connor's critics. I shall not return to it.

Daux mounted a fierce rhetorical attack on Connor, attributing to him 'imaginary difficulties' but mostly asserting, rather than arguing, his case:⁴ ὁ μὲν refers grammatically back to τῷ δέ and therefore an Athenian commander *must* be implied; the Athenians *are* present in section 5, hidden as they are behind the pronoun αὐτούς, and therefore, contrary to Connor's hypothesis, the city whose interests a *proxenos*

² G. C. Cobet, *Variae Lectiones* (Lugduni-Batavorum, 1873), p. 441: 'Interpolatum est *Κρῆς*: etiam si non praecederet ἐς Κρήτην satis erat *Γορτύνιος*. Praeterea veteres non dicebant *Κρῆς Γορτύνιος*, sed *Κρῆς ἐκ Γόρτυνος*, ut 'Ἀρκάδες ἐκ Φεγεοῦ, et sim.' This has now been refuted by a host of counter-examples, cf. Daux (below, n. 4), p. 94, and Gerolymatos (below, n. 6), p. 83.

³ M. B. Walbank, *Athenian Proxeny of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Toronto and Sarasota, 1978), no. 32.

⁴ G. Daux, 'Thucydide et l'événement', *CRAI* (1979), 89–103. Cf. p. 98: 'Ce n'est pas sérieux, ni psychologiquement, ni historiquement.'

represents *is* at least implied. The great merit of Daux's article, however, was to point to some peculiarities in Thucydides' prose through which the historian's psychology is observed to shine.

Karavites also found Connor's view totally unacceptable.⁵ He pointed out that the metamorphosis of the Cretan Nikias into his Athenian namesake creates a new inconsistency which Connor underplayed – the absence of Nikias' patronymic in this passage. 'Were we to accept Connor's argument, the absence of the patronymic here will be a greater anomaly than we can tolerate, since this passage is the very first mention of Nikias and a patronymic would be more logical here than anywhere else in the entire text' (p. 309). Thus, Karavites carries the argument back to the starting point: 'The Nikias referred to in 2.85.5 is probably a Cretan... and *ὁ μὲν λαβών* and *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* remain obscure references that in all probability refer to an Athenian official who will remain a mystery' (p. 310).

Gerolymatos⁶ adds a further argument to refute Connor. Nikias the son of Nikeratos could not have been a *proxenos* of Gortyn since in the fifth century 'it was not customary for a man to hold the *proxenia* of more than one state', and since 'the Athenian Nikias was a *proxenos* of Syracuse (Diod. 13.27.4), he is unlikely also to have been a *proxenos* of Gortyn' (p. 84). Drawing on his study of betrayal of cities by *proxenoi*,⁷ Gerolymatos further suggests that the priority given to Cydonia by the assembly could be accounted for by Nikias of Gortyn's associates in Cydonia who were presumably prepared to betray the city.

Connor in his book on Thucydides⁸ reacted to the criticism of Daux and Karavites by making a statement which is to my mind self-contradictory. Conceding that *Κρής Γορτύνιος* is a legitimate double ethnic, he still claimed validity for the rest of his original argument. But, if *Κρής Γορτύνιος* is indeed a legitimate double ethnic, what justification is there to remove *Κρής* from the text? And if *Κρής* is not removed, the Gortynian Nikias cannot be transformed into an Athenian, the ethnic *Κρής* barring such possibility. The whole argument then crumbles. But Connor's thesis does not seem to hold even if he does *not* make this concession. The cumulative effect of the objections is overwhelming. What is more, the question which ultimately prompted Connor to propose his emendations – why did Thucydides not name the Athenian commander in charge of the twenty ships?⁹ – can be answered without doing such violence to the text. In what follows I hope to show that in terms of the practice described and the psychology revealed, the passage accords well with a whole series of similar incidents described by Thucydides. It does not need to be modified.

As observed above, it was mainly Thucydides' failure to name the person in command of the twenty ships that intrigued most commentators. 'As Classen remarked', wrote Gomme (*HCT* ii.221), 'it is curious that he is not named (contrast 67.2, 80.5–6, 83.4) either here or in 92.7,¹⁰ especially as *ὁ μὲν λαβών* below should refer to him rather

⁵ P. Karavites, 'The Enduring Mystery of Nicias (Thuc. 2.85.5)', *Klio* 62 (1980), 307–10.

⁶ A. Gerolymatos, 'Nicias of Gortyn', *Chiron* 17 (1987), 81–5. Gerolymatos does not seem to be aware of Daux, op. cit. (n. 4) and Karavites, op. cit. (n. 5).

⁷ A. Gerolymatos, *Espionage and Treason. A Study of the Proxenia in Political and Military Intelligence Gathering in Classical Greece* (Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 61–4 and 109.

⁸ W. R. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton, 1984), p. 77 n. 62.

⁹ Note that if *τῷ δὲ κομίζοντι* is equated with Nikias the Athenian, the text is purged of the unnamed actor.

¹⁰ Where the narrative of the Cretan expedition is resumed: 'The twenty Athenian ships from Crete, which were to have joined Phormio in time for the battle, arrived at Naupactus' (my italics). Again, the name of the commander in charge is omitted.

than to Nikias of Gortyn. Even Busolt, iii.660.1, thinks the suppression of the name due to personal or political reasons; but why?' That it is suppressed cannot be doubted. It is inconceivable that this man should have been a nonentity or that his name should have been unknown to Thucydides. The twenty ships he had been put in charge of bespeak a high military rank, in all probability a *strategia*. A historian who took the trouble scrupulously to record the names, patronymics and ethnics of *non-Athenian* commanders of as small forces as that under the Locrian Proxenos, son of Kapato (three hundred Locrians, 3.103.3), or of the Corinthian Xenokleidas, son of Euthykses (three hundred hoplites, 3.114.4), can reasonably be expected to be familiar with the name of an *Athenian* commander, put in charge of *twenty* ships (about 4000 men!), at a time when Thucydides still lived in Athens and was, in all probability, actively involved in political life. The omission of the name cannot, therefore, be excused by the incompleteness of Thucydides' work or by his being uninformed. Moreover, the unnamed commander's actions had far-reaching consequences for that year's military operations. By reason of the diversion and the delay that ensued, several of Phormio's ships were lost and many Athenians were slain (Thuc. 2.90.4–6). The causal link between the two events could not have escaped the attention of Athenian politicians, ever ready to apportion blame. True, the formal resolution to divert the ships to Crete was taken by the assembly, and superficially the assembly was to be blamed for the consequences. But I cannot follow Gomme's suggestion that Thucydides is not hinting at great fault in the commanding officer (Gomme, *HCT* ii.222). The commanding officer was guilty in at least three respects, as a careful reading of the Thucydidean text shows. First, he did not accomplish his mission: Cydonian land was ravaged, but Cydonia itself was not brought over to the Athenians. Second, he co-operated with Nikias in misleading the assembly. For, although Nikias promised the assembly to bring over Cydonia, this was a mere pretext for a different goal which he had in mind. Nikias intended to gratify the people of Polichne, the neighbours of the Cydonians. The Athenian commander apparently accepted this interpretation of his mission's aim: he 'helped the Polichnitans to ravage the land of the Cydonians'. Third, because of bad weather, he wasted much time on this futile operation (at least from an Athenian point of view). To conclude, there is a glaring disparity between the significance of this man and the absence of his name. The inference is irresistible that Thucydides knew who he was but chose not to state it.

What I would like now to suggest is that by shifting our attention from textual matters to the social institutions which structured behaviour it becomes possible to clinch a 'fact' which Thucydides was reluctant to disclose. The clue comes from the Gortynian's name, Nikias. Although this is a common name, it has already been noted that it could signify a tie of *xenia* with the Athenian Nikias' family.¹¹ The two men were after all contemporaries and had the same name. That such might be the case is suggested by a series of instances in which a *xenos* from one community named a son after a partner from another community. As sons in ancient Greece were normally called after their father's father, the name of a *xenos* could act in alternate generations as a name and a patronymic. The name Alkibiades, for example, given after a Spartan *xenos*, alternated through five generations in Athens, and through six in Sparta: Alkibiades I in Athens, named by his father after his Spartan *xenos*; the

¹¹ Cf. G. Huxley, 'Nicias, Crete and the Plague', *GRBS* 10 (1969), 235–9, at 239: 'The name is, presumably, coincidental unless there was some tie of guest-friendship with the Athenian's family.' I myself have tentatively adopted this interpretation in *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 141 n. 66, 177.

latter's son, Kleinias I, son of Alkibiades I; the latter's son, Alkibiades II, son of Kleinias I; the latter's son, Kleinias II son of Alkibiades II; the latter's son, Alkibiades III, son of Kleinias II – the Alkibiades made famous for posterity by Thucydides and Plato.¹² In Sparta, the Alkibiades whose name migrated to Athens named a son Endios. Endios' son was Alkibiades son of Endios, and 'Endios' and 'Alkibiades' then alternated as names and patronymics until we get down to Endios, son of Alkibiades, the Spartan who sponsored the Athenian Alkibiades' defection to Sparta. The homonymy of the Gortynian and the Athenian Nikias can by analogy be attributed to a similar ancestral *xenia*.

This conjecture is somewhat reinforced by the fact that Nikias of Gortyn was a *proxenos* of Athens. As I have shown elsewhere, *proxenia* implied *xenia*; unless inherited, a *proxenia* was invariably bestowed upon an outsider by consequence of recommendations and manoeuvres by an insider-*xenos*.¹³ The case of Alkibiades and Endios might again serve as a useful paradigm. Apart from the existence of the six-generation *xenia* between the two families, and the explicit evidence for a name originating in one family and alternating in another, we also happen to know that Alkibiades' ancestors had been granted a *proxenia* by the Spartans.¹⁴ Combinations such as this of homonymy and *proxenia* are too numerous to be coincidental.¹⁵ The Gortynian Nikias' *proxenia* might thus be an additional pointer to an underlying *xenia* – the *xenia* responsible for the homonymy.

I have so far used the word 'conjecture' to describe the probability of the nexus, but I think at this point we approach near certitude. According to a passage of Theopompus,¹⁶

when the Athenians were attacked by pestilence, and the Pythian priestess bade them purify the city, they sent a ship commanded by Nikias, son of Nikeratos, to Crete to ask the help of Epimenides. And he came in the 46th Olympiad (595–92 B.C.), purified the city, and stopped the pestilence... (*FGrHist* 457 T1 = 115 F 67a = Diog. Laert. 1.110, Loeb trans.)

Three points stand out: the Athenian commander sent out was the fifth-century general's namesake, Nikias son of Nikeratos; Epimenides, the *mantis* fetched to stop the plague, was a Cretan, like Nikias of Gortyn; and finally, it was Nikias who was dispatched no doubt because he was deemed able to fetch Epimenides. The story does not, of course, confirm the existence of the sixth-century *xenia* between the families of Nikias and Epimenides. But it makes it extremely likely. After all, Epimenides' visit to Athens in the early sixth century is independently attested (*Arist. Ath. Pol.* 1.1), and somebody had to fetch him. Why not Nikias? This possibility is to some extent reinforced by a third-century B.C. inscription from Oropos, in which an Athenian by the name of Nikias, son of Epimenides, is awarded the title of *proxenos* (*IG* vii.274). Since this is the only instance in which the name Epimenides is borne by an Athenian

¹² Thuc. 8.6.3 with J. K. Davies, *APF*, Table I. My forthcoming article 'Patterns of Name Diffusion within the Greek World and Beyond' contains numerous further examples of name migration.

¹³ See Herman, *op. cit.* (n. 11), pp. 130–42.

¹⁴ Thuc. 5.43, 6.89; Plut. *Alcib.* 14. Cf. M. B. Wallace, 'Early Greek Proxenoï', *Phoenix* 24 (1970), 189–208.

¹⁵ See Herman, *op. cit.* (n. 11), pp. 140–2, with Appendix B, and 'Patterns of Name Diffusion...' (n. 12).

¹⁶ G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* (Gotha, 1895), ii².212 n. 1, F. Jacoby *FGrHist* 457 introduction, p. 313, and J. K. Davies, *APF*, p. 403 tend to regard the story as a later invention, possibly dating from the period of the Peloponnesian war. Huxley, *op. cit.* (n. 11), tends to accept it as historical. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1951), pp. 141–6 goes so far as to suspect the value of *all* the evidence for Epimenides, with the implication that his very existence might have been fabricated.

citizen throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods, and since it is associated with that of Nikias, it would be an extraordinary coincidence if it were not, following the pattern of Alkibiades and Endios, the Cretan seer's name alternating within the Athenian general's family.¹⁷

Whatever might be the evidential value of this inscription for the sixth century (that is unnecessary for my argument), for the fifth century it serves firmly to establish that Nikias of Gortyn and the Athenian Nikias' family were bound by *xenia*. Their homonymity, by consequence, is not a matter of coincidence; it stems from their *xenia*. We can also infer that this was an *at least* second generation *xenia*: Nikias the Gortynian was named by his father in acknowledgement either of a *xenia* which his father forged or of one which he inherited. In any case, this *xenia* was much earlier than 429 B.C. We can also guess that the Gortynian Nikias' patronymic was Epimenides – or at least that the name Epimenides was borne by one of the members of his family. The same holds true with respect to Nikias the Athenian. We know the name Epimenides was not present in his own line – Nikias was the son of Nikeratos. But the name of a *xenos* is given only to *one* of the sons – mostly, but not always, the first son born after the conclusion of a *xenia*;¹⁸ brothers are named differently. The name of the *xenos* thus alternates within *one* male line only. A good illustration of this pattern is provided by the case of Aristokritos the Spartan, Lysander's father. Aristokritos was a *xenos* of Libys, ruler of certain parts of Cyrene, and Lysander's brother was appropriately named Libys (Diod. 14.13.5, cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.28). The *xenos*' name, however, alternated only within Libys' line: Libys son of Aristokritos, Aristokritos son of Libys, etc. Within Lysander's line, the pattern would have been Lysander son of Aristokritos, Aristokritos son of Lysander, etc.¹⁹ It goes without saying, however, that the obligations of *xenia* devolved upon the descendants of both lines, whatever their names.

Can an Epimenides, son of Nikias, or a Nikias, son of Epimenides, be accommodated within the Athenian general's family? The possibilities are many. Nikias' family is poorly attested. Apart from the general's own line (Nikeratos I, Nikias I son of Nikeratos I, Nikeratos II son of Nikias I, Nikias II son of Nikeratos II, and Nikeratos III son of Nikias II), we only know by name two other sons of Nikeratos I from another marriage, Eukrates and Diognetos.²⁰ The name Epimenides could have been transmitted through a cousin, a brother or another son of Nikeratos

¹⁷ An Athenian tombstone from the Roman period (*IG* ii².6220) also bears this combination of name and patronymic: Epimenides N[ei]k[io]u Thorikios. In *IG* ii².8463, an Athenian inscription from the Roman period as well, the deceased is styled Nikias Nikiou Gortynios, which fits in with both the obligation of a *xenos* to bury and commemorate a dead partner (cf. Herman, *op. cit.* (n. 11), pp. 26 and 136) and with the occasional change of the A-B-A-B pattern of name-inheritance into A-A-A-A; cf. *IG* ii².237, where an Acarnanian *xenos* of the Athenian general Phormio has his son *and* grandson named Phormio. These inscriptions might indicate a further extension of the relationship in time. I have no comment to make on [M]ounychos Epimenid[ou] in *IG* ii².2271, line 21, from the period of the late Roman empire.

¹⁸ It is unclear to me at what stage in life the children were given the name of their father's *xenos*. In *Hdt.* 3.55.2, the son of the Spartan Archias is said to have adopted the name Samios 'because he was the son of that Archias who was slain fighting gallantly at Samos', and this seems to suggest that the adoption of the name occurred at a time when he was old enough to grasp the symbolism of such an act. The implication might be that names were not necessarily given at birth.

¹⁹ In actuality this succession of names did not take place since Lysander only fathered daughters, cf. P. Poralla and A. S. Bradford, *A Prosopography of Lacedaemonians* (Chicago, 1985), no. 504.

²⁰ Cf. Davies, *APF*, pp. 403–7 and Table I.

I. On the hypothetical assumption that it was a Nikias, father of Nikeratos I, and grandfather of Nikias I, the general, who initiated the *xenia*, the *stemma* would look as shown in Figure 1.

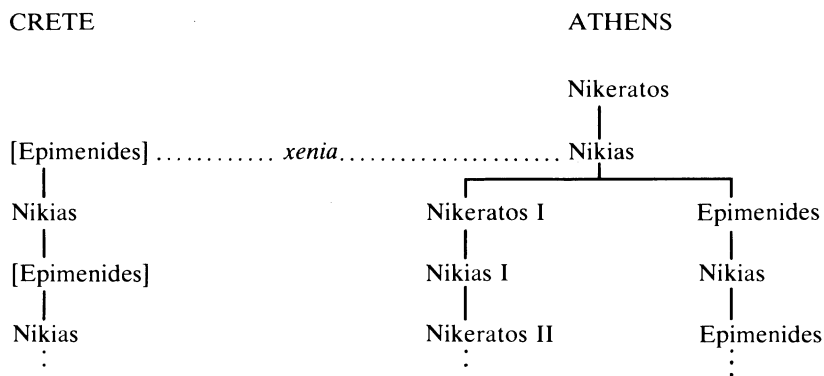


Figure. 1. Stemma of Nikias and Epimenides.

What makes the case of the two Nikiases peculiar is that here we have a concrete example in which *both* people involved in a *xenia*-dyad named a son after each other, thus creating within a few generations several people with the same names and the same patronymics in their respective communities.²¹ That no other traces of these people are left in the sources is just another indication of our poor state of documentation.

There is, however, a slight difficulty concerning Epimenides' ethnic which has to be faced: Epimenides was reportedly a Cnossian (Diog. Laert. 1.109.1, Suda s.v. *Epimenides*) or a Phaestian (Plut. *Solon* 12.7), the fifth-century Cretan Nikias a Gortynian. If I am right in the conjecture that this Nikias is a descendant of Epimenides, he or one of his ancestors must have moved from Cnossus (or Phaestus, the contradictory traditions indicating how unreliable this piece of information is)²² to Gortyn.

Although it cannot be excluded that the unnamed commander hidden behind τῷ δέ and ὁ μὲν was an unknown member of Nikias' family, the most likely candidate is the general himself. The evidence is mostly circumstantial. First, Plutarch knew of a tradition according to which Nikias served as a general even before Perikles' death in 429 B.C. (*Nicias* 2.2). In the list compiled by Fornara, there are for the year 429/8 seven unknown *stratēgoi*.²³ Secondly, Plutarch relates that Nikias owing to his superstitious character (Plut. *Nicias* 4.1, cf. Thuc. 7.50.1) had attributed great importance to his association with seers. Hiero, an acolyte reared in his household,

²¹ Other examples of two people of different cities having the same names and the same patronymics are Lichas (or Liches), son of Arkesilaos (or Arkesileos), in both Sparta and Thasos (see Herman, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 20), and Menestheus, son of Iphikrates, in both Athens and Miletus (cf. J. K. Davies, *APF*, pp. 250ff. with G. Kawerau and A. Rehm, *Das Delphinion in Miles* iii.1 (Berlin, 1914), no. 138, line 67). I am indebted to Professor D. M. Lewis for the latter example.

²² See H. Demoulin, *Épiménide de Crète* (Brussels, 1901), pp. 89ff. for a detailed, but inconclusive, analysis of the sources relating to Epimenides' city of origin.

²³ C. W. Fornara, *The Athenian Board of Generals from 501 to 404* (Wiesbaden, 1979) [*Historia, Einzelschriften*, Heft 16].

is said to have managed his secret dealings with the *manteis* (Plut. *Nicias* 5.3). And Plutarch was familiar with one of the now lost dialogues of Pasiphon, in which it was recorded that

he [i.e. Nicias] sacrificed every day to the gods, and that he kept a *mantis* at his house, ostensibly for the constant enquiries which he made about public affairs, whereas most of his enquiries were really made about his silver-mines; for he had large interests in the mining districts of Laurium, and they were exceedingly profitable, although worked at great risk. (Plut. *Nicias* 4.2, Loeb trans.)

So dependent was Nicias on these *manteis* that after the death of Stilbidas, his seer-associate who accompanied him to Sicily and who, in Philochorus' words, 'used to set him free from most of his superstitions',²⁴ Nicias completely lost his head when the moon was eclipsed (Plut. *Nicias* 23, cf. Thuc. 7.50.4).

To be sure, Nicias was not exceptional in his association with seers. We may in this respect follow Pritchett's generalization that for all the Classical age and all the city-states 'there were *manteis* who were closely associated with certain prominent leaders in various states.'²⁵ And a quick glance at Pritchett's list of such associations will suffice to show that these *manteis* came almost without exception from communities other than the leaders they served. I list the seers known by name, community of origin and the communities or generals they served, following Pritchett's section on military *manteis*:

Agesias of Stymphalos (Hiero of Syracuse)
 Amphilytos of Acarnania (Peisistratos of Athens)
 Aristandros of Telmessos (Alexander the Great, a Macedonian)
 Astyphilos of Poseidonia (Kimon of Athens)
 Eukleides of Phlius (the Lampsacenes)
 Kleomenes of Sparta (Alexander the Great, a Macedonian)
 Megistias of Acarnania (the Spartans)
 Silenos of Ambracia (Cyrus the Younger, of Persia)
 Sthorys of Thasos (Konon of Athens)
 Teisamenos of Elis (the Spartans)
 Telliias of Elis (the Phocians)
 Thrasyboulos of Elis (the Mantineans)
 Thrasyboulos of Elis (Pyrrhos, King of Epirus)²⁶

That these *manteis* were *xenoi* is sometimes explicitly attested. The poet-warrior Simonides of Ceos was a *xenos* of the Acarnanian *mantis* Megistias.²⁷ The *xenia* of the Athenian general Konon with the Thasian *mantis* Sthorys is suggested by the Athenian citizenship granted to Sthorys (Kett, no. 61).²⁸ Moreover, in more than one case we have good reason to suspect that this underlying *xenia* was responsible for the homonymy between a prominent leader and a *mantis*: the list of *manteis* from the Classical and Hellenistic periods includes such distinguished names as Eukleides, Thrasyllus, Kallias, Kleomenes, Orthagoras, and Thrasyboulos (Kett, nos. 28, 38, 41,

²⁴ Plut. *Nicias* 23 = F. Jacoby, *FGH Hist* 328 (Philochorus) F 135 (cf. Schol. Aristoph. *Peace* 1031), and cf. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War* iii (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1979), p. 62: 'Whether Stilbidas was the same *mantis* as the one who lived with Nicias in Athens (*Nicias* 4), we do not know'. The data on *manteis* are assembled in P. Kett, *Prosopographie der historischen griechischen Manteis bis auf die Zeit Alexanders des Grossen* (Diss. Erlangen, 1966), cited hereafter as Kett; Stilbidas = Kett, no. 63.

²⁵ Pritchett, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁶ Pritchett, op. cit., pp. 49–56. These seers were sometimes granted citizenships and proxenies in the cities they served, but that is another matter.

²⁷ Hdt. 7.228.4, with Kett, no. 50; cf. Herman, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 26.

²⁸ *IG* ii².17 + *SEG* 15.84 + *SEG* 16.42, with M. J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* (Brussels, 1981) [4 vols. in 3] D8.

45, 55, respectively, the two Thrasybouloi not being included). In the case of the seer Theainetos we might even have the connecting link. Theainetos was *mantis* to the general Tolmides, and his statue, seen and described by Pausanias in the second century A.D. (Paus. 1.27.5), stood on the Acropolis at Athens, beside the temple of Athena, on the same pedestal as Tolmides'. (This Theainetos is omitted by Kett.) Theainetos accompanied Tolmides in several great battles in the 50s and 40s of the fifth century until Tolmides died at Coronea (447 B.C.). In Thuc. 3.20.1 (427 B.C.), we encounter another *mantis*, by the name of Theainetos, son of Tolmides (Kett, no. 31). Taking into account chronology and the naming-pattern typical of *xenia*, this man could have been either the son of Tolmides, named after Theainetos, or the grandson of Theainetos, who called his own son Tolmides (as shown in Figure 2).

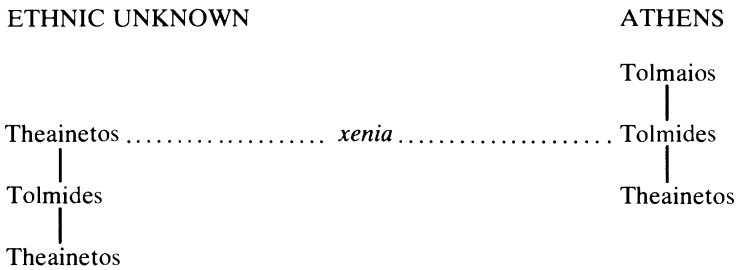


Figure 2. Stemma of Theainetos.

In any case, the parallel with Nikias, son of Epimenides, is perfect: in both cases the combination of the personal names of two *xenoi*, a general and a *mantis*, results in the name and the patronymic of a son: 'Theainetos' and 'Tolmides' gave rise to 'Theainetos, son of Tolmides', whereas 'Nikias' and 'Epimenides' merged into 'Nikias, son of Epimenides'. In view of all this, a *xenia* between the wealthy Athenian general Nikias and a member of one of the most renowned and most ancient *manteis*-families of Crete is more than likely.

The somewhat paradoxical implication of this inference is that Connor has almost been right: Nikias *was*, most probably, involved in the Cretan adventure, not, to be sure, by himself but in association with Nikias the Cretan. Connor, however, has misjudged the difficulty, or what seems to modern eyes an improbability. The apparent improbability lies neither in the Gortynian's double ethnic nor in the omission of the city whose *proxenos* he was but in this cooperation between the Athenian commander and Nikias the Cretan. For, unbelievable as it may seem, the unnamed Athenian commander betrayed the interests of his state in order to

²⁹ Theainetos' city of origin is unknown, and W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen* (Munich, 1905), i.254 took the Theainetos described by Pausanias and the one mentioned by Thucydides to refer to the same man: the seer who accompanied Tolmides on his campaigns and had his statue erected next to Tolmides' was none other than Tolmides' son, an Athenian. This is unlikely, since Pausanias regards Theainetos' being a seer to Tolmides (*ὃς ἐμαντεύετο Τολμίδῃ*), rather than his being Tolmides' son, as the most characteristic feature of their relationship. Furthermore, as observed above (p. 8), military *manteis* came regularly from communities other than the ones in which they exercised their trade. If Theainetos were an Athenian, this would be a unique departure from this regularity. Pritchett did not think Paus. 1.27.5 and Thuc. 3.20.1 referred to the same man: 'It is an odd coincidence that the mantis of the Plataians in 428 B.C. was likewise named Theainetos and was the son of a Tolmides: Thuc. 3.20.1', op. cit. (n. 22), p. 54. Gomme, *HCT* ii.280, suspected Theainetos son of Tolmides was a Plataean. Kett (no. 31) was unaware of Paus. 1.27.5 and therefore denied any connection between Theainetos, the seer in Thucydides, and Tolmides, the Athenian general.

promote the interests of his Cretan *xenos*. He acted precisely in the same fashion as the Spartan Endios, who in 420 B.C. betrayed the interests of Sparta in order to promote the interests of his Athenian *xenos* Alkibiades.³⁰ Nikias tricked the assembly into believing that the diversion of the ships was to serve communal interests,³¹ a claim which was subsequently refuted both by the failure to bring over Cydonia and by Phormio's losses. In short, what Thucydides is describing in this passage comes dangerously close to treachery.

It is, I suggest, within this frame of reference that we should consider the reason for Thucydides' suppression. I have argued that the tension between the obligations of *xenia* and of citizenship is one of the central themes running through Thucydides' history. This tension could resolve itself in real or faked demonstrations of solidarity with one's fellow-citizens, as in the case of Perikles; in total renunciation of civic obligations and unrestrained co-operation with *xenoi*, as in the case of Alkibiades; in an inability to satisfy the demands of civic loyalty and having consequently to endure accusations, trials and punishments, as in the case of people such as Archidamos, Pausanias and Themistokles.³² However, whatever the precise form the relationship takes, it is not unproblematic. Disclosure of a piece of information, to which the historian had privileged access through his network of informants but which was presented in a different light to the general public, could have had unpleasant consequences for his protagonists, his protagonists' families or their descendants. As several of the Attic orations reveal,³³ such information could be brought against them years after the event in question. And then it would make a great difference whether a man known to the historian to be guilty of treachery had or had not been mentioned in the history. Thucydides in all probability omitted Nikias' name from the Cretan adventure so as to prevent Nikias' enemies from being able to use this information as evidence against Nikias – or Nikias' family, or Nikias' descendants.

This interpretation can to some extent be supported by two similar omissions. One occurs in 3.2.3. Here, the Mytilenaeen *proxenoi* of Athens who notified the Athenians about the impending revolt are left unnamed. From Aristotle's *Politics* we learn that their leader was Dexandros, a *proxenos* of the *polis* (1304a9). We cannot tell with certainty whether this detail was unknown to Thucydides, whether he thought it unimportant, or whether he chose to omit it in order to spare Dexandros accusations. But it has to be noted that the omission occurs again within the context of *xenia*, *proxenia* and civic loyalty. And so it does in the next example.

Here (Thuc. 3.52), the Spartan commander responsible for the siege of Plataea is unnamed.³⁴ At first sight his conduct seems beyond reproach: it was under orders from Sparta that he refrained from taking Plataea by storm. But then it becomes clear that a certain disagreement did exist between himself and the home-authorities. (*Always* there is a conflict between a field commander and the higher military echelons not involved in actual fighting.) Whereas the commander promised the Plataeans that

³⁰ Cf. Herman, op. cit. (n. 11), pp. 146–52.

³¹ The reputation of healers and purifiers enjoyed by Epimenides' family – the seer's profession tended to be handed down from one generation to the next – might have played some role in persuading the assembly to comply with his demands. The plague at Athens reached its climax at that time.

³² Cf. Herman, op. cit. (n. 11), *passim*.

³³ Examples: Lysias 14 (*Against Alkibiades*); 18 (*Property of Nikias' Brother*); 19 (*On the Property of Aristophanes*).

³⁴ Cf. Gomme, *HCT* ii.221: 'In iii.52.2 the Spartan commander at the siege of Plataia has no name; but, though even this is unusual in Thucydides, and some Plataians are known by name (iii.52.5), it is more easily explicable.'

in the event of their voluntary surrender he would punish the guilty but none contrary to justice, the Spartan judges who came after the surrender were clearly contemplating a collective punishment. And again the name of one of the spokesmen sent by the Plataeans to avert such treatment, Lakon son of Aeimnestos (3.52.5), is highly revealing. There can be little doubt that this man owed his patronymic to his grandfather's *xenia* with the notable Spartan who, according to Herodotus, killed Mardonios at the battle of Plataea (Hdt. 9.64.2). (The name Lakon was in all probability adopted further to reinforce the bond.)³⁵ It is by reason of this *xenia* that the Plataeans thought he could prevail upon the Spartans. If the unnamed Spartan commander in 427 B.C. was indeed both a descendant of Aeimnestos and a hereditary *xenos* of the Plataean Aeimnestos, the suppression of his name might again be due to fear of accusations that his way of conducting the siege was influenced by his *xenia*. This upper-class solidarity, which permeated the life of the city-state, and, in its opposition to the *demos*, appeared to Thucydides as the standard of normality, knew no political boundaries.

To conclude, these examples of name-suppression in Thucydides are not arbitrary; rather they follow a more-or-less clearly articulated pattern. Thucydides wrote contemporary history, and was painfully aware that his work could play an active role in the reality which he was describing. He was aware that the *demos*, who punished him for his own failure at Amphipolis, might persecute other upper-class leaders as well if only they were supplied with the right kind of incriminating evidence. This awareness has left a clear mark on his manner of writing.

The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

GABRIEL HERMAN

³⁵ The reading 'Arimnestos' in the standard editions of Herodotus and Plutarch (Hdt. 9.64.2 and Plut. *Arist.* 19.1) should, in view of this, be emended into 'Aeimnestos', a version which on palaeographical grounds seemed to be inferior. The reading 'Aeimnestos' in Thuc. 3.52.5 is unproblematic.