# HERODOTOS AND ATHENS

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*When I first put to Mary White the argument which I shall be advancing this evening, she grinned in that engaging way she had and said something to the effect that I could "never get away with such absurdity." It was my ambition to persuade her that I* could *get away with it, sadly an ambition that cannot now be realised. That is only a trivial reason for missing Mary; there are more serious reasons. That we shall never be able to read her book on Tyranny, for example. But what we all miss far more is Mary herself, her pure, unselfish devotion to her subject, to scholarship in the practice of it, to honesty; to the pupils to whom she taught the subject and to the College which she loved so well and which allowed her to teach it. Above all her wry, dry, quizzical, sympathetic self, her great humanity.*

*Mary had many adorable traits, one among them was that she was deeply attached to Oxford. Herodotos was similarly attached to Athens and it is this attachment that we now try to explore. Mary liked her Oxford College, she worshipped her tutor but she did not dislike other tutors or abominate other Colleges. Similarly it is ridiculous to suggest that Herodotos was pinned down to one particular political group in Athens. Herodotos could have dined one evening with Perikles, the next with Thucydides son of Melesias—I imagine that he did. But it does not follow from normal human, in his case superhuman, open-mindedness that there is a lack of political belief or of political inclination—Mary was polite to all but she was more inclined to be devoted to Theodore Wade-Gery than to some others.*

OUR FIRST QUESTION MUST BE what was the Athens which Herodotos found himself in in about 450 B.C. It was an Athens in which there were conservatives and in which there were radicals, an Athens in which some old men were going round saying "Ephialtes was a pity" and others were saying "Ephialtes was a good thing;" but it was not an Athens that was involved in any immediate discussion about its constitutional future. That issue had been settled. Athens had the constitution which it had acquired thanks to Ephialtes in 462 and for fifty years thereafter no one tried to reverse that decision. Common to all was acceptance of the constitution

This article is much in the form in which it was delivered as the Mary White Memorial Lecture at Trinity College, Toronto, in September 1981. I am most grateful to my hosts for their kindness, especially for allowing me to pay some respect to the memory of a good friend. I do not insult the reader by adding footnotes to some debated assertions (e.g., on the Sophoklean authorship of *Antigone* 904 ff.) The arguments on either side will be familiar.



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and, more importantly, common to all was an enormous pride in Athens itself. Let us never forget that. Perikles called Athens a model for the rest of Greece. I do not think that any right-wing opponent would have questioned that. Time and again worship of Athens breaks through the self-satisfied, conservative austerity of Thucydides; from the pages of the *soi-disant* oligarch, the Ps.-Xenophon, it positively oozes.

This is not to say that there was no domestic political debate in the 440s—only that we cannot readily grasp its nature or its content. Individuals can be recognised, Perikles, not the undisputed leader before 444/3, Thucydides son of Melesias, heir to Kimon's conservatism, the shifty diplomat Kallias, heroes of the battlefields, Tolmides and Myronides; but their domestic stances are in darkness, an even darker darkness after Professor Andrewes's recent exercise in Plutarch-bashing.[1]

Foreign affairs are a trifle more to hand. The old question, "Who was the enemy, Sparta or Persia?", had been settled formally by the outbreak of the first Peloponnesian War in 460, and by the Peace of Kallias in 449, but it still lurked near the surface and brought with it friendships and enmities with Argos, Korinth, Megara, Boiotia, Thessaly, and the rest; or, to be more specific, with certain Argives, Korinthians, Megarians, Boiotians, Thessalians.

In sum, we must not generalise. Herodotos, already an experienced politician himself, was in Athens between about 450 and, very probably, 444/3. We must judge his political outlook by his reaction to Athenian politicians and their policies in those years: not without hesitation earlier, not, certainly, later. That is the core of my argument. If it is put with firmness and clarity, it is not because firmness or clarity is warranted by the evidence; in the night all cats are grey—but it can be helpful to paint them black and white.

To avoid painting too many black or white without justification, I shall omit many obvious problems, promising only that none has been left out because it might tell against the case. Kallias, for example—his marital affairs, his plenipotentiary activities, his wealth and Herodotos' attitude to all of them—these are far too complicated to be discussed. Similarly it is difficult to contemplate the family of Miltiades and his son Kimon with confidence. Miltiades was the hero of the battle of Marathon and Herodotos says so (not ungrudgingly). There is an unnecessary reference to Kimon by name in a later fracas in Thrace (7.107.1), yet, on the other hand, a full story of Miltiades' disgrace at Paros. How do we strike a balance?

To stick then to the firm among characters. Sophokles, the Alkmeonid family, and Perikles himself. I choose to begin with Sophokles because, though firm, he provides no very clear-cut answer and is therefore a warning against a search for any clear-cut answers.

[1] A. Andrewes, "The Opposition to Pericles," *JHS* 98 (1978) 1–8.

No one has ever expressed any serious doubt that Sophokles and Herodotos were fairly close to each other in their general view of the world, of the role of man and of man versus god. Rather than repeat the arguments I ask you to entertain by contrast the possibilities of coupling Herodotos with the stern, uncompromising Aeschylus or the pettifogging quibbler Euripides. With Sophokles he is at home. And there is, moreover, the direct evidence not only in Sophokles' copying of a Herodotean story in *Antigone* 904 ff. (cf. 3.119), but in the poem which he is said to have addressed personally to the historian *ᾠδὴν Ἡροδότῳ τεῦξεν Σοφοκλῆς ἐτέων ὢν πέντ' ἐπὶ πεντήκοντα* (Plut. *Mor.* 785b). It would take a stout stomach to believe that the recipient was another Herodotos.

But so what? To be a friend of Sophokles was to be a political friend of—who? Let us not stir up the dust of debate between Professor Ehrenberg and Professor Lloyd-Jones[2] but merely record that Sophokles owed his first dramatic success in 468 to the conservative Kimon, that he served in 443/2 as Treasurer to the Delian League (largely Kimon's foundation), that he was a general in the campaign against Samos in its revolt of 441/0 and according to the contemporary poet, Ion of Chios, was criticised by Perikles for his incompetence ("a good poet but a lousy general," *FGrHist* 392 F 6), and finally that he helped to create the sadly-starred oligarchy in Athens in 411. At that stage one might argue that he was too old to have much judgement—but he was still capable of producing the *Oedipus Coloneus* five years later so we must not allow too many excuses to senility. In other words, his record is impeccably right-wing and it needs only a superficial reading of the *Antigone*, the product of the years with which we are directly concerned, to confirm that view. In so far as Herodotos' association with Sophokles is evidence of anything, it is evidence that he mingled with the Athenian right.

The Alkmeonid family, then, that distinguished group whose remarkable political energy was only matched by their adaptability. Once again, no one has ever doubted that the bulk of Herodotos' account of Athenian history comes from Alkmeonid sources—we have a tapestry beautifully wound round an Alkmeonid frame and, where necessary, twisted to suit Alkmeonid interests. The apologetic account of the conspiracy of Kylon, the story of Kleisthenes and its aftermath, the Ionian Revolt, above all the blatant defence of the family against the charge of Medism (at 6.126 ff.), a charge of which they were certainly guilty in general if not in particular —all this adds up. But once again, as with Sophokles, so what?

After the ostracisms or threatened ostracisms of the 480s, the family had begun to scramble its way back into respectability by marrying one of its available girls to Kimon, darling (when sober) of the Athenian right; it had

[2]V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954), reviewed by H. Lloyd-Jones in *JHS* 76 (1956) 112–113.

joined Kimon enthusiastically in the hounding down of Themistokles, in having him condemned for treason in the early 460s and, no doubt, in yelping for his ostracism a little earlier. In other words an impeccable right-wing history—and nothing else of importance is known of the family in or around the years with which we are concerned except for the little matter of Perikles.

Perikles. It was twenty years ago almost to the day that I said in Toronto that Perikles was not a member of the Alkmeonid family. Twenty years of repetition does not seem to have had the stunning effect which self-evident truth should have. But it remains true—Perikles was not an Alkmeonid. Mother was; father was not. When the marriage happened the family certainly hoped that the union and its offspring would help its political future, but as the same family had found some time earlier with Peisistratos, such hopes can be dissolved—*ἐμίσγετό οἱ οὐ κατὰ νόμον*, "there was incompatibility." With effect, from the age of consent, and probably much earlier, Perikles had nothing, *but nothing* to do with his maternal relatives and his whole political career was based on a fundamental opposition to what we can guess about their attitudes.

So, in political terms, Perikles was not an Alkmeonid. He was, hesitantly before 462, more evidently before 450, noticeably before 444/3, thereafter beyond question, Athens' leading politician. How did Herodotos view him? We are restricted to one sentence. After his egregious defence of the Alkmeonids against the charge of Medism Herodotos remarks that one of their girls had a dream when pregnant. She imagined that she was about to give birth to a lion and, lo and behold, Perikles appeared. A lion is a fairly terrifying thing to give birth to, an impressive thing—and if you recall what was said at the outset about Herodotos as an open-minded, even if not uncommitted observer, you will agree that Perikles would be as impressive to him as to anyone—the lion metaphor is not very astonishing. Herodotos uses it elsewhere—at 5.92 the tyrant Kypselos of Korinth is a lion, *karteron, omesten,* mighty, ravening—not very friendly words. The notion in itself means nothing except that Perikles was a man not to be tangled with too readily.

To turn then to his attitudes to other states in Greece. Here the prejudices are easier to appreciate and there will be nothing controversial in the appreciation offered here. It is not so easy to arrive at interpretation.

Let me illustrate the complexity with one example. The city of Argos, second only to Sparta in the Peloponnese, had sided with the Persian invader in 480. She had not offered the Persians any active support but she had sternly refused to help the Greeks and, in her strategic position and with her strength, refusal to help was tantamount to positive treachery. Then in the neighbourhood of 470 she was prepared to give refuge to an Athenian political exile, the radical Themistokles, and joined that able operator in

some fairly violent anti-Spartan activities. In 462 she made a formal alliance with Athens and fought with her against Sparta during the first years of the Peloponnesian War. But she made peace with Sparta in 451 while Athens fought on. Meanwhile she had enjoyed some sort of democratic government between 480 and about 467, an aristocratic reaction between about 467 and 463, further democratic control after 463. Thereafter we know nothing.[3] Herodotos defends the Argive neutrality of 480 with something approaching passion: "This however I do know," he writes, "that if every nation were to bring all its evil deeds to a given place in order to make an exchange with some other nation, when they had all looked carefully at their neighbours' faults they would be truly glad to carry their own back again. So, after all, the conduct of the Argives was not perhaps more disgraceful than that of others" (7.152.2). Moreover, elsewhere (at 6.83) he gives his explanation of the Argive "disgrace"—true Argives, i.e., Argive aristocrats, were out of power in 480, the city was in the hands of a nasty bunch of what he calls slaves, not to be expelled for a dozen years or so. Small wonder that the real Argives could not help the loyal cause.

At this moment we revert briefly to the personality of Themistokles, a gentleman who for all his services to Hellas did not win Herodotos' favour. Where recognition of his genius is given, it is given grudgingly and where possible belittled or misinterpreted. In 480, we are told, Themistokles helped to ease the Persian King's escape from Greece: "all this Themistokles did in the hope of establishing a claim upon the King; for he wanted to have a safe retreat in case any mischance should befall him at Athens—which indeed came to pass afterwards" (8.109). This is an outrageous remark. It is quite inconceivable that on the morrow of Salamis Themistokles was looking ahead to about 467 when disgrace did indeed "come to pass." No. This is a retrospective invention of his enemies of 467, of Kimon and of the Alkmeonids, an invention which Herodotos is delighted to transmit. There is not a great deal of firm profit here, the ins and outs of Argive politics, the precise chronology of them cannot be fixed delicately enough. But the hints are surely broad ones. Themistokles' associations are with the so-called "slaves," in fact democrats of some sort, Herodotos' with the aristocrats who expelled them and Themistokles in the early 460s, and it is not rash to extend the pattern to later years when Perikles had replaced Themistokles and Herodotos, bless him, was still Herodotos.

One other case can be quickly disposed of before the two major ones. Thessaly. Herodotos deals tenderly with the Medism of Thessaly for the Thessalians too, like the Argives, had supported the invader. But not the

[3]For this story see *CQ* N.S. 10 (1960) 221–241. Several modifications have been offered either of terms or of dates but none, I think, reduces the complexity (see, most recently, J. L. O'Neil, *CQ* N.S. 31 [1981] 335–346, with earlier references).

whole Thessalian people. No. Just one group of Thessalians, the leading family, the Aleuadai. The others were as white as the snows of Olympos (7.172.1).

In 480 Thessaly was indeed dominated by the family of the Aleuadai and, as Herodotos no doubt rightly says, they Medised with gusto. Afterwards Sparta wanted to punish the treachery by expelling Thessaly from the Delphic Amphiktyony; they were defended, successfully, by Themistokles (Plut. *Them.* 20). But somewhere about the same time the Spartan King Leotychidas went on an expedition against them (6.72) though, so the story, he was bribed to go away again. Plutarch (*Mor.* 859d) does claim that Leotychidas managed to put down two tyrants in Thessaly but what he means by tyrants is not in this context clear. The upshot is that, if anything, we ought to believe that Sparta and her friends tended to dislike Aleuadai, Themistokles and democratic characters appear to have liked them. Then, in 461, came a Thessalian alliance with Athens, and in 461 such an alliance must have had Periklean support. In about 457 Athens' friends were expelled; in 454 Athens tried to restore them and the man they tried to restore was almost certainly an Aleuad.[4] Herodotos on the other hand blames the Aleuadai and excuses Thessalians in general—the only thing we can conclude is that Herodotos was not with Perikles. I do not suggest that this is the whole truth. We know even less of the truth about Thessalian history in the fifth century than we do of Argive, but, on the strength of what we have, the most plausible version of events makes Herodotos attack (and rather emphatically attack [this is not just a matter of reporting the facts]) the very group whom Perikles would be likely to be dealing with. At the least there is no justification for taking the opposite view.

But let us turn to more meaty moutons. Commentators note that Herodotos is severe on the little state of Phokis (8.30) in spite, they say, of its Athenian leanings. They make no attempt to explain this severity, and severity it is for Herodotos here firmly notes that Phokis was on the Greek side in 480 for no good motive but only because Thessaly was on the other side. "I am convinced," he snidely remarks, "that if the Thessalians had remained loyal the Phokians would have Medised." This bitterness can in fact be explained quite easily, and a useful explanation it is. It was a permanent ambition of the Phokians to control the oracle of Apollo at Delphi; it was a permanent ambition of the oracle not to be so controlled. In the middle years of the fifth century each side realised its ambition several times and, also, with some consistency as far as we can see, throughout these years Athens was backing the Phokians, Sparta the Delphians. The story filled in with a bit of harmless conjecture runs thus. Until about 458 Delphi was independent and was solidly anti-Themistokles and Perikles,

[4]John S. Morrison, "The Place of Protagoras in Athenian Public Life (460–415 B.C.)," *CQ* 36 (1941) 1–16.

pro-Kimon and Sparta; about 458 Phokis took over the sanctuary and briefly under her control the oracle became pro-Perikles and anti-Spartan. There may have been a Spartan interlude of a few months at the time of the battle of Tanagra but, if there was, it was only an interlude. However in about 448 the Spartans re-established Delphic independence for a bit; shortly afterwards the Athenians put back the Phokians. Then, at an unknown date, but very probably when the Athenians lost their control of Central Greece in 447, Delphi became independent again and thereafter remained on a solidly Spartan ticket until the Peloponnesian War.

Now Herodotos' attachment to Delphi is one of the few points about him which has never been questioned and indeed cannot be. To produce a complete list of the evidence would take an age and in best oracular fashion I merely indicate. He quotes Delphic sources (1.20 and 51 and 8.39); he is thoroughly familiar with the site (1.51 again); his partiality for the place leaps out of the whole account of the Persian invasion in which one absolutely certain fact is that the oracle Medised up to the hilt but where, as far as he is concerned, this Medism appears only to those who are prepared to read between the lines. He does not go so far as to give his personal approval to the story of how Apollo miraculously saved his sanctuary from the advancing barbarians by throwing stones at them, but one cannot help feeling that he would like to. Says his most sensitive critic, "Where Delphi is concerned the piety of Herodotos gets the better of his critical sense." Piety is not the right word, but certainly his fondness plays havoc with his judgment.

Many have argued that the whole story or at least the greater part of the story of Kroisos in Book 1 comes directly from the Delphic priests and, even if we accept a more modern case which detects genuine eastern elements,[5] they have certainly been filtered through the cleansing hands of the priesthood. I should certainly agree. Notice how (in 1.91) Kroisos himself is made to admit that all the trouble was his own fault and not that of Delphi—it makes a perfect pro-Delphian and, I should say, Delphian ending to a nice moral story which, if the truth were told, would have reflected very badly on the oracle indeed.

You will have remarked the chronological doubts set out above. Coupled with the uncertainty about the precise dates of Herodotos' stay and his composition, it does not look easy to extract anything from this, but if we combine his love of Delphi with the anti-Phokian jibe at 8.30 it becomes clear that the Delphi to which he was attached was the Delphian Delphi, not the Phokian Delphi, and from there the pro-Spartan, pro-Alkmeonid, pro-Kimonian, anti-Periklean Delphi. This I take to be a very firm point in the argument.

But the proof of the case lies in the presentation of Sparta. At the heart

[5]H. Klees, *Die Eigenart d. gr. Glaubens an Orakel u. Seher* (1965).

of the disagreement between Perikles and Thucydides Melesiou lay the issue of Sparta and the issue was a simple one. Was Sparta the natural enemy to be destroyed if and when possible?—so Perikles—or should Greece be divided between Athens and Sparta, Athens ruling the sea, Sparta the land, both cooperating to maintain their position?—so Kimon, so Thucydides. Herodotos' whole history is a justification of the Athens/Sparta dualism—perhaps that puts it a bit too extravagantly but it is at any rate a presentation of those heroic achievements which above all could be used to justify the Athens/ Sparta dualism, a presentation which in no way disqualifies them as a justification. This is not to deny that Herodotos saw things from an Athenian point of view—any reader of the history must agree that he did; it is not to deny that he gave the chief credit for the victory of 480/79 to the Athenians—he explicitly says that he does; it is not to deny that he inserts a few anti-Spartan remarks—they are obvious. But any Athenian, however dualistically minded, would do the same. Even Kimon was proud of Athens and even Kimon when he had been sent home from Ithome by the Spartans in disgrace must have had a few hard things to say about his unreliable friends. But Herodotos' appreciation of Sparta, such as it was, his criticism of Sparta, such as it was, was the criticism and the depreciation of someone who thought fundamentally in terms which Perikles did not use.

To make this clear among the facts. It is easy enough to pick out individual passages where the Spartans show indecision, too much caution, perhaps a little stupidity, a narrow Peloponnesian view of things, even a positive ill-will against Athens. But to use these to argue that Herodotos was anti-Spartan is just plain wrong. King Kleomenes and the Spartans refuse to send help to Ionia in 499 when in revolt against Persia (5.50). But since Herodotos was violently opposed to the revolt and positively criticises the Athenians for backing the Ionians (5.97.2) this is nothing much. Again we are told that the Spartans turned up late at Marathon because they were celebrating a festival (6.106 and 120). We have to be told so because that is what happened. However much one may try to read between the lines no hint can be found that the Spartans could or should have done otherwise. It is only modern historians who impute cowardice or selfishness or deceit. And Herodotos indeed insists that as soon as they were free to march they marched with astonishing speed (6.120) and Spartans being Spartans that was quite speedily. Other passages again contain criticisms with which even the most pro-Spartan Athenian could easily agree. At 6.108.3 the Spartans suggest that Plataia should ally herself with Athens because they wanted Athens to get into trouble with Thebes. Does even the most pro-American Canadian claim that the U.S. has never acted selfishly or against Canadian interests? In 9.6 and following there is no doubt that Herodotos gives the impression that Sparta is behaving badly and is letting Athens down in her

gallant stand against the Persians north of the Isthmos. The Spartans keep putting the Athenians off and are obviously only concerned to defend the Isthmos wall and the Peloponnese behind it. In the end it is only an argument from expediency that gets them moving. But again, however pro-American one may be one cannot pretend that the U.S. came into the last war before Pearl Harbour, and that staunch pro-American, Churchill, once or twice alluded to a significant part of the war in which, with rather less regard for the truth than Herodotos shows, he claimed that "we stood alone." No. One picks out a pro-American by his general belief that Britain or Canada and America should be together, an anti-American by his general belief that they should not. And the same goes for a fifth-century Greek. Here the mere fact that Herodotos tells the story of a joint Spartan/Athenian War is vitally significant; the way he tells it is more than vitally significant. For one thing, by the time we reach the war itself we have no doubt at all that Sparta is the leading state in Greece and that her command in the war itself, even at sea, follows almost automatically (cf. 1.69, 141, 152; 3.46; 5.38; 6.49, 84, 108, etc.). Secondly, in the way he tells it, there is not a trace of any attempt to minimise Sparta's contribution. Marathon is presented as a purely Athenian victory, as indeed it was, and there are signs that Herodotos may have been exaggerating in some small and wholly forgivable ways its greatness (see, e.g., 6.112.3). But let us remember that the victor of Marathon was Miltiades, Kimon's father, and let us remember too that Marathon played a large part in the Kimon/Themistokles struggle of the 70s.[6] By contrast notice that although the Athenians were given the prize of valour for the battle of Mykale, a fact that Herodotos dutifully records (9.105), the account of the battle is not based on Athenian sources. And let us remember that the Athenian commander in this battle was Xanthippos, Perikles' father. It would be odd, if Herodotos spent so much time at Perikles' dinner-table, that he did not pick up a little more information on his father's achievements in the great war.

The Athenians were given the prize of valour at another battle too—Artemision, and here there is no doubt that Herodotos accords them more prominence and gets some of his information from Athenian sources but no one ever has pretended or could pretend that his account of Artemision is an encomium on the Athenians as his story of Thermopylai is a paian for Leonidas and his gallant Spartans. Similarly in the story of Plataia the Spartans are quite clearly the heroes, in spite of one little dig (9.70.2) about their incompetence at siege warfare—a dig that Kimon himself must often have made after his experiences at Ithome (and which Herodotos himself repeats in a different form at 5.65.1). The Spartans and their commander

[6]P. Amandry, "Sur les 'épigrammes de Marathon'," in *Θεωρία: Festschrift für W.-H. Schuchhardt* ed. F. Eckstein (Baden-Baden 1960) 1–8.

Pausanias are the heroes and it is worth while to note in passing that whereas for Thucydides (1.128 ff.) there is no doubt at all that Pausanias was a thorough villain who intrigued against his country with Persians or helots or whoever came to hand, Herodotos has no such feelings. Even at his most pro-Athenian he is only prepared to say that Pausanias was *accused* of doubtful conduct, not that he was guilty. But that is by the way. Thermopylai and Plataia are Spartan victories; Salamis, of course, is an Athenian victory. That no doubt is how it was—Sparta won on land, Athens at sea—but that precisely is the dualist argument, and the only conceivable moral that one can draw is that Herodotos accepted the dualist argument. Contrast the whole of his history with the *Persae* of Aeschylus. It is a different world. The *Persae* was not mere Athenian jingoism, it was much more than that. But it does play down Sparta's role in the defeat of Xerxes. That is reduced to one line, one single reference to the Dorian spear (817). Certainly there are dramatic reasons for this but it is worth remembering the *Persae* as a sign of what the real Athenian outlook may have been before we write of Herodotos as an Athenian propagandist. For me, however, the decisive point is another one, a famous one. In 6.98.2 Herodotos reaches a critical moment in his story; the Persians approach mainland Greece for the first time and he pauses to note the greatness of the occasion by reporting an earthquake in Delos. Then he goes on, "This was a sign from God of the terrible things to come. For in the reigns of Dareios, Xerxes and Artaxerxes the Greeks had more troubles than in twenty earlier generations, some coming from the Persians, the others as a result of the leading states of Greece quarrelling about the leadership of Greece" (6.98). Here he is certainly thinking about both Peloponnesian Wars and—this is what matters—he is regretting them, they bring *kaka*, disasters. This is not the way that Perikles thought about these wars. Of course everyone agreed that any war brings *kaka* but equally no one with a sense of style or a sense of history or, more importantly, a sense of politics, can imagine that Perikles or anyone who positively wanted Athens to have supremacy would or could have written words like this. They are the words of a man who, as Kimon had put it, did not want Greece to be lame (Ion, *FGrHist* 392 F 14), who saw Greece led by Sparta and by Athens, hand in hand, who no doubt might blame Sparta as much as or more than Athens for what had happened but who regretted it. Perikles did not. Herodotos was not Periklean.

To sum up. Herodotos was enamoured of Athens; of course he was. But the Athenians with whom he felt at home, the Athenians he knew and admired were not Perikles and his friends. Far from it. They were the old guard. It was Athenian polite society, enormously civilised, tremendously cultivated, intellectually way out ahead of its time—perhaps even ahead of Perikles (for it is only in politics that a *demos* is usually in front, otherwise

it is conservative to the backbone), intellectually in front, to a certain extent nationalistic, at any rate proud of Athens as all Athenians were but fundamentally hostile to the new society, to Periklean society if that meant that its own influence was in any way to be diminished.

Herodotos was not a reactionary pamphleteer. He was a great historian of fantastic insight who was doing his best to find out how things had happened and what made things tick. But like all historians, however great, he had his prejudices and one above all others which he shares with all Greek authors and most modern historians into the bargain. He was himself an aristocrat, he thought like an aristocrat, he liked talking to aristocrats, worst of all, he believed aristocrats. He therefore reflects their views. He reflects them on Samos, on Egypt, on Argos, and on Athens, and unless we read him with that in mind we shall never understand the great poem that he wrote—nor shall we understand the Athens in which he wrote it.

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