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Three Aspects Of Spartan Kingship In Herodotus

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HERODOTUS' *HISTORIES* ARE GOVERNED by the rule of resemblance: they explain the nature of a given historical phenomenon by suggesting similarities to unrelated phenomena entirely different in other respects.[1] We may safely state, in particular, that Herodotus' analysis of any form of personal power is inseparable from his representation of monarchical rule. This was an essential feature of the foreign culture that threatened the integrity of Hellas at the time of the Persian wars, and it provided the Greeks with a foil for self-definition.

The components of the monarchical model in Herodotus have often been discussed,[2] and I need only to recall a few points. The speech of Otanes in the Constitutional Debate is the basic theoretical document (3.80). The monarch is here defined as an individual who "can do what he wants without being accountable" (*ἀνευθύνῳ ποιέειν τὰ βούλεται*). When placed in such a position, even the best of men finds himself outside the normal way of thinking (*καὶ γὰρ ἂν τὸν ἄριστον ἀνδρῶν πάντων στάντα ἐς ταύτην τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκτὸς τῶν ἐωθότων νοημάτων στήσειε*) and commits many unbearable things (*πολλὰ καὶ ἀτάσθαλα*) out of *ὕβρις* and *φθόνος*. Typically, the monarch subverts ancestral laws (*πάτρια νόμαια*), he does violence to women, and he puts people to death without trial.

I am happy to dedicate this chapter to Martin Ostwald with gratitude and admiration.

1. The importance of analogical thought in Herodotus is widely recognized. See especially the work of Immerwahr (1966) and Lateiner (1989, 191–96).

2. Immerwahr 1966, 154–88; Lateiner 1984; Lateiner 1989, 163–85; Gammie 1986; Hartog 1988, 331–34. The existence of such a model in Herodotus has been denied by Waters (1971, 7 et passim).

The other narrative elements that contribute to the representation of monarchy in the *Histories*—the factual evidence Herodotus has collected, his own authorial glosses, and the reported statements of different characters—encourage a more complex view of reality and sometimes contradict the words of Otanes.[3] On the whole, however, Herodotus' λόγος confirms his assessment, and it does so especially through the narrative of certain types of actions. Mutilations throughout the *Histories* symbolize the king's relentless assertion of power over all others—subjects, foreigners, family members, and women—which reduces them to the status of possessions, that is, slaves.[4] The elements of excess, transgression, and desire to rule are often signified through the crossing of physical boundaries (rivers and seas) into a forbidden space, which the king nevertheless claims as his own.[5]

These symbolic actions, sometimes in combination, also help to convey another feature of despotic behavior that Otanes does not explicitly mention—the wretched deeds of the ruler include direct challenges against the divine. The conquering king does not merely cross rivers in order to get to the other side. He harnesses them with cables, flogs them, destroys their potency by dividing them up into streams, brands them as slaves, curses them, and shoots them with arrows. Burning temples and destroying statues of the gods are defacements of the sacred, and Cambyses cuts up an Egyptian divinity, the Apis bull.[6] The despot's denial of the divine—or at least of some of its manifestations—combines with his need to rival and to subject it.[7]

Otanes' indictment of monarchical power has the effect of establishing absolute monarchy per se as a negative model, wherever and under whatever circumstances it may come into being.[8] The rest of the λόγος treats

3. E.g., Croesus' piety and generosity balance his negative side; see Nagy 1990a, 274–78. See also the narrator's positive assessment of the rule of the tyrant Peisistratus at 1.59.6. In other respects Peisistratus conforms to Otanes' description; for example, he does violence to women and violates customs at 1.61.1. Otanes loses the debate, and his evaluation is to some extent undermined by the view, expressed by Darius (3.82) and confirmed by the narrative of the *Histories*, that monarchy has been a source of power and freedom for the Persians.

4. See Hartog 1988, 331–34, for a catalogue of royal mutilations, including whipping, in Herodotus.

5. On the metaphor of crossing see especially Lateiner 1989, 126–35.

6. For physical aggressions against rivers see 1.75, 1.189; 2.111; 7.34–35. For the destruction of temples see 6.101, 8.53. For the destruction of statues of the gods see 3.37. For the Apis bull see 3.29.

7. Cambyses, for example, is jealous of Apis as well as incredulous about his divinity (3.27–3.29.2). See Munson 1991, 59; Hartog 1988, 331. For monarchical claims to equal the divine see 1.99, 1.204; 3. 35; 7.8 γ 1, 7.56.

8. Cf. the evaluation of the Corinthian Socles specifically in reference to Greek tyrants (5.92 α 1).

absolute monarchy—characterized by unaccountability—not as separate and unique, but rather as a limiting status. The narrative concerning all individuals whose will can to some degree determine history explores whether their will to power leads them to ὕβρις and φθόνος and to those actions that the words of Otanes and the evidence of history identify as despotic. In this way not only such monarchical rulers as barbarian kings and the last century's Greek tyrants but also such non-hereditary constitutional leaders as generals and politicians are measured by the standard of the Persian monarchy,[9] as the representation of a barbarian reality meshes with the warning on the dangers of individual prominence among the Greeks.

In this general context, Spartan kings play an especially important role because they represent a rare survival of true royalty within the Greek world of the city-states.[10] Their constitutional position in no way resembles that of the kings of Persia. They are diarchs, not monarchs, and Herodotus clearly shows that they limit each other's power and are each accountable to the other constitutional bodies of the Spartan state.[11] As kings, however, to some extent they are like other, monarchical, kings.

On the other hand, the monarchical model is in direct antithesis to anything Spartan. If monarchy—including the tyrannical regimes the Greeks have experienced—is essentially un-Hellenic,[12] Dorian Sparta is for Herodotus the city-state that provides the fullest illustration of what it means to be Greek. Sparta has never known a tyrannical regime, and from the beginning of the *Histories* is recognized as the most important city of Greece, almost the representative of all the Greeks.[13]

9. E.g., Miltiades, who dies of a leg wound as a result of an impious action perpetrated during his imperialistic attack on Paros (6.133–36), is somewhat analogous to Cambyses (3.64.3). For the high-handedness of Themistocles see Munson 1988, 98.

10. The kingships of Macedon and Cyrene (4.159–67, 4.200–205; 5.18–22) are of course marginal to that world. The king of fifth-century Argos mentioned at 7.149.2, must have been a disempowered religious official; see How and Wells [1928] 1964, 2:189. The Bacchiads of Corinth are called μούναρχοι by the Pythia (5.92 β 2), but they constitute an oligarchy. Other prominent Greek monarchs who figure in the *Histories*, including those of Asia and the West (especially Gelon), are tyrants. The distinction, which is not clearly reflected in Herodotus' use of the Greek words τύραννος and βασιλεύς, has to do with the legitimacy and antiquity of the royal dynastic line. For the problems in the terminology see Ferrill 1978.

11. For mutual limitation of power see 5.75; 6.63–66, 6.73. Two kings in Herodotus are deposed by judicial bodies, Demaratus for illegitimacy, and Leotychides for bribery (6.65–66, 6.72). King Cleomenes is prosecuted before the ephors on a charge of bribery (6.82). King Anaxandridas is practically forced by the ephors and gerontes to take a second wife under a veiled threat of deposition (5.40). See Cragg 1976, 90–91.

12. The connection between tyranny and barbarism in fifth-century Greek thought has been recently discussed by Hall 1989, 58–59.

13. For the narrative of the alliance with Croesus and Croesus' evaluation, see 1.6.2,

While trespassing of proper boundaries is a characteristic of monarchical powers, respect of geographical limits is typical of Sparta.[14] Monarchical rulers tend to challenge the gods; Sparta's behavior is utterly conditioned by the divine.[15] Most important, monarchies constitute a threat to the laws, but since the reforms of Lycurgus—says the narrator—Sparta has been the land of εὐνομίη (1.65).[16] The Spartan position in the fundamental antithesis between the rule of one man versus the rule of law is expressed through the statement of King Demaratus to Xerxes that the Spartans have νόμος (law and order) as their only master. In the particular sphere of warfare, Demaratus says, this master bids them "not to flee from a host in battle, no matter how large, and to stay in their station and either to conquer or die."[17]

This famous passage, which we may regard as the theoretical document for the Spartan model and the reverse of the speech of Otanes on monarchy, should be taken in conjunction with the words by which Demaratus describes all the Greeks when he praises them for their ἀρετή "produced by wisdom and strong law."[18] Spartan virtues are all Hellenic features that only

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1.53.3, 1.56.1–2, 1.69. For the narrative of the Ionian embassy to Sparta, see 1.141.4, 1.152–53.2. For Sparta's inexperience of tyranny (Corinthian evaluation), see 5.92 α 1–2.

14. See especially the narrative at 1.66–67 and Immerwahr 1966, 202–6. Spartan reluctance to cooperate with other Greek states north of the Isthmus during Xerxes' invasion is partially due to a reluctance to go beyond the Peloponnese.

15. Immerwahr 1966, 201–2. The Spartans consult Delphi more frequently than anyone else in the *Histories* (1.65.2–4, 1.66–67, 5.63, 6.52, 6.66, 6.76, 7.220, 8.114). Sparta enjoys the protection of the hero Orestes after finding his bones and moving them within its territory (1.68). When Delphi bids the Spartans to free Athens from the tyrants, they do so, even though the Peisistratids are their friends. The narrator's gloss explains the action by generalizing that the Spartans "consider divine things more important than human affairs" (5.63.1–2). Spartan delay and inadequate presence at Marathon and Thermopylae respectively are due to the celebration of religious festivals (6.106, 7.206). Similarly, the story of the consequences of the killing of Persian heralds at 7.139 and the narrator's gloss about apparent Athenian impunity for the same crime attest to Sparta's special closeness to the divine.

16. Herodotus makes Lycurgus the uncle of king Leobotes, dating him to about 1000 B.C., earlier than all other sources (How and Wells [1928] 1964, 1:88). Ostwald (1969, 70, 75–78) gives as one of the meanings of εὐνομία a condition characterizing "a state which is well governed and in which justice, peace, and order prevail," and this is the meaning the term has in this passage, with no necessary connection to the specific Lycurgan κόσμος.

17. ἐλεύθεροι γὰρ ἐόντες οὐ πάντα ἐλεύθεροί εἰσι· ἔπεστιν γάρ σφι δεσπότης νόμος, τὸν ὑποδειμαίνουσι πολλῷ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ σοὶ σέ. ποιεῦσι γῶν τὰ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ἀνώγῃ· ἀνώγει δὲ τώυτὸ αἰεί, οὐκ ἐῶν φεύγειν οὐδὲν πλῆθος ἀνθρώπων ἐκ μάχης, ἀλλὰ μένοντας ἐν τῇ τάξι ἐπικρατέειν ἢ ἀπόλλυσθαι (7.104.4–5). Since the meaning of νόμος as subject of ἔπεστιν is "law and order" (see Ostwald 1969, 31), I think we must assume an ellipsis yielding the sense "They have a master, law and order, which bids them to obey all their laws. And in war the law is always not to flee from the battlefield." For illustrations in the narrative of courageous behavior in obedience to the law see especially 7.134–36, 7.208–33 (with the epigram at 7.228.2).

18. τῇ Ἑλλάδι πενίη μὲν αἰεί κοτε σύντροφός ἐστι, ἀρετὴ δὲ ἐπακτός ἐστι, ἀπό τε σοφίης κατεργασμένη καὶ νόμου ἰσχυροῦ· τῇ διαχρεωμένη ἡ Ἑλλὰς τήν τε πενίην ἀπαμύνεται καὶ τὴν

manifest themselves to a greater degree and more consistently in the Spartans than in anyone else. Herodotus does not represent Sparta as peculiar vis-à-vis other groups of Greeks,[19] but rather as the fullest representative of Hellenic culture. The only essential characteristic that makes Sparta qualitatively different from other Greek city-states is its kingship.[20]

In the narrative of book 6, Herodotus inserts a description of various privileges (γέρεα) that the Spartans have conferred upon their kings (chaps. 56–59). This idea conforms to a Hellenic model,[21] and the section partially represents the diarchy as an institution integrated in the constitutional system (e.g., the kings are ex officio members of the γερουσία, 57.5) and reflecting the values of the city-state (the kings must be the first to march and the last to retreat in war, 56). The religious functions of the kings are greatly emphasized, above all the two priesthoods of Zeus (56). Some of the honors listed are relatively modest (e.g., the right of receiving double rations of food at banquets, 57.3). Others are suited to the position of a high state official (e.g., the right to occupy the front seats at athletic contests, 57.2; and the jurisdiction over the marriage of heiresses, 57.4).

One of the first γέρεα mentioned, however, points in the opposite direction. Herodotus states that the kings have the right to bring war against any country they wish, with the penalty of a curse on any Spartan who tries to prevent them (56). The provision is ambiguous and possibly anachronistic.[22] Nevertheless, the phrase πόλεμον ἐκφέρειν ἐπ᾽ ἣν ἂν βούλωνται χώρην recalls the monarch's power in Otanes' description (ποιέειν τὰ βούλεται, 3.80.3), and the notion of unaccountability in one sphere of power is here, at least in principle, connected with the Spartan kingship.

The suggestion of barbarism also intrudes in this account. The presence of an ethnography in itself implies something foreign to be described. In the second part of the list—devoted to the honors Spartan kings receive after their death (58–59)—the parallel with non-Greek cultures is in fact made explicit in the narrator's glosses: "The custom of the Lacedaemonians concerning the death of their kings is the same as among all the barbarians of Asia; most of the barbarians follow the same custom when their kings

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δεσποσύνην (7.102.1). In 7.102.1–2, Demaratus' focus progressively narrows from the Greeks in general, to the Dorians, to the Lacedaemonians.

19. As fourth-century sources will do; see M. I. Finley 1968b, 156–57.

20. Demaratus, speaking to Xerxes, calls Sparta a "kingdom" (βασιληΐη, 7.209.4).

21. Barbarian monarchs do not receive γέρεα from their subjects/slaves, but see the kings of the Greek colony of Cyrene (4.162.2, 4.165.1), as well as the Homeric representation of kingship (e.g., *Il.* 12.310–21). See Carlier 1977, 74 n. 37.

22. Carlier 1977, 72. It is not clear whether the power to declare war or strategical power is meant and whether it was attributed to the kings individually or collegially.

die" (6.58.2).[23] "Also in this other thing they resemble the Persians" (6.59).[24] These evaluations cooperate with the narrative of the actions: People are *compelled* (ἀνάγκη, 6.58.1), a term that elsewhere regularly describes the compulsion of monarchical rule)[25] to go to the king's funeral; free men and women are *compelled* (ἀναγκαστούς, 6.58.2) to befoul themselves in mourning (a reminder of monarchical mutilations).[26] The suspension of all commercial and political activity during ten days of mourning after the death of a king (58.3) signifies that the city itself is dead when the king is dead. As in a monarchical system, where there are no citizens, the king is the commonwealth and no one else counts.[27]

The coexistence of the Spartan and the monarchical models emerges in Herodotus' representation of the behavior of individual kings. At one end of the spectrum we find Leonidas, the perfect embodiment of the Spartan model. In contrast with several Spartans in the *Histories* who chose to leave the city because they would not be simple citizens and could not be kings,[28] Leonidas is the citizen who became king by chance.[29] At Thermopylae he

23. See the excellent analysis of this passage by Hartog (1988, 152–56) in the context of a discussion of "otherness," especially in reference to Herodotus' representation of the Scythians and their kings.

24. The custom so introduced is the incoming king's remission of debts owed to one of the kings or to the state. Cf. Smerdis' remission of tribute to the subject nations (3.67).

25. Munson 1988, 95, n. 18.

26. For self-mutilation of a subject of the Great King see 3.153–59. Are Spartiates included or excluded in the provision about compulsory presence at the funeral? The text is ambiguous. How and Wells ([1928] 1964, 2:87–88) and Hartog (1988, 153) mention the Solonian and the Lycurgan provisions about moderate funerals for the citizens as a counterpart to the extravagant rituals described here (Plut. *Sol.* 12, *Lyc.* 27, *Mor.* 238d). They also draw attention to the reference to a partial form of embalming—an additional barbaric feature—in Herodotus' description at 6.58.3.

27. Cf. 8.102 on the importance of Xerxes' survival. The barbaric identification of king and city is expressed in Aesch. *Supp.* 370–75.

28. Theras, after being regent for the twins Eurysthenes and Procles, went off to found a colony, "considering it a terrible thing to be ruled over by others" (δεινὸν ποιούμενος ἄρχεσθαι ὑπ' ἄλλων, ἐπείτε ἐγεύσατο ἀρχῆς, 4.147.3). Dorieus, who had hoped to become king on the basis of his merit, left Sparta when his half brother was chosen on account of seniority, "considering it terrible and unfair to be subjected to the kingly power of Cleomenes" (δεινὸν ποιούμενος καὶ οὐκ ἀξιῶν ὑπὸ Κλεομένεος βασιλεύσασθαι, 5.42.2); his alienation from the community is illustrated by his failure to consult Delphi as to where he should found his colony and to do "any of the customary things" (ποιήσας οὐδὲν τῶν νομιζομένων). After being deposed from the kingship on the grounds that he was not the legitimate son of Ariston, Demaratus held an unspecified public office but was mocked by Leotychides, who sent a servant to ask him how he liked being a magistrate after being king (ὁκοῖόν τι εἴη ἄρχειν μετὰ βασιλεύειν, 6.67.2). This mockery recalls the question of Harpagus to Astyages after the latter had been conquered by Cyrus: "How did he like his slavery in place of kingship?" (ὅ τι εἴη ἡ ἐκείνου δουλοσύνη ἀντὶ τῆς βασιληίης, 1.129.1). Demaratus replied with a threat, veiled his head in sign of withdrawal, and finally left Sparta for the Persian court.

29. He could not foresee that both his two older brothers would die without heirs, and "the thought of kingship was far from his mind" (7.205.1).

decides to remain with his three hundred Spartiates and hold the pass against an overwhelming Persian force because "he did not think it was seemly for them to leave their post" (7.220.1). In other words, Leonidas as an individual professes in action the principles that in the theoretical formulation of the Spartan model voiced by Demaratus apply to the collective body of Spartan citizens.[30] Reversing the terms of the monarchical equivalence between king and city, his death entails not the death of the commonwealth but its survival.[31]

Almost at the other extreme is Cleomenes, whose defacements of the divine, drunkenness, and—most especially—clinical madness, make him the Greek counterpart of the Persian despot Cambyses.[32] Cleomenes is, however, a mixed figure. Made king "by inheritance and not because of merit"[33] and represented as occupying an almost monarchical position,[34] he takes separate "monarchical" initiatives, often to the detriment of the commonwealth.[35] Yet he sometimes appears conspicuously in harmony with the ethos of the city.[36] He is both Spartan and "foreign"—he rejects the bribes and expansionistic enticements of two Asiatic tyrants[37] but adopts barbaric drinking customs from some Scythian guests (6.84).

30. Boedeker 1987, 198.

31. Compare the notice at 6.58.3 about burial and mourning in the list of honors due to a Spartan king after his death (*ἐπεὰν δὲ θάψωσι, ἀγορὴ δέκα ἡμερέων οὐκ ἵσταταί σφι οὐδ' ἀρχαιρεσίη συνίζει, ἀλλὰ πενθέουσι ταύτας τὰς ἡμέρας*) with the oracle mentioned at 7.220.3–4 in connection with the death of Leonidas (*ἢ μέγα ἄστυ ἐρικυδὲς ὑπ' ἀνδράσι Περσείδῃσι/πέρθεται, ἢ τὸ μὲν οὐχί, ἀφ' Ἡρακλέους δὲ γενέθλης/πενθήσει βασιλῆ φθίμενον Λακεδαίμονος οὖρος*).

32. See 3.16, 3.27–29, 3.37 (Cambyses' sacrilegious actions); 3.34–35 (Cambyses' drunkenness). Cambyses and Cleomenes are the only two individuals the narrator in his own voice describes as mad. The verbal correspondence is remarkable. Cambyses: *ὑπομαργότερος* (3.29); *αὐτίκα ἐμάνη, ἐὼν οὐδὲ πρότερον φρενήρης* (3.30.1). Cleomenes: *οὐ φρενήρης ἀκρομανής τε* (5.42); *αὐτίκα ὑπέλαβε μανίη νοῦσος, ἐόντα καὶ πρότερον ὑπομαργότερον* (5.75.1). See Griffiths 1988, 70–71; Munson 1991, 50.

33. *οὐ κατ' ἀνδραγαθίην...ἀλλὰ κατὰ γένος* (narrator's evaluation, 5.39.1). Cleomenes is here being compared to his half brother Dorieus, whose overall portrayal is however also ambiguous; Herodotus' praise of him here contrasts with the narrative of his actions at 5.39.2 (see n. 28 above).

34. See 5.49.1, *Κλεομένεος ἔχων τὴν ἀρχήν* ("at the time when Cleomenes held *the* power"), noted by Carlier (1977, 77).

35. Cleomenes intervenes in Athens to set up his friend Isagoras as tyrant (5.70, 5.72, 5.74.1), attempts to collect hostages from Aegina "without the authorization of the Spartan commonwealth" (*ἄνευ...Σπαρτιητέων τοῦ κοινοῦ*, 6.50; words of the Aeginetans), contrives the deposition of his Eurypontid colleague Demaratus (6.61.2, 6.65–66), and stirs up rebellion against Sparta in Arcadia, binding the people there with oaths of allegiance to himself (6.74).

36. See especially the narrator's evaluations: *κοινὰ τῇ Ἑλλάδι ἀγαθὰ προεργαζόμενον* (6.61.1); *δικαιότατος ἀνδρῶν γίνεται* (3.148.2).

37. 3.148 (Maeandrius of Samos); 5.50–51 (Aristagoras of Miletus). Aristagoras also promises the opportunity to "rival with Zeus in wealth" (5.49.7)—a typical tyrannical wish (cf. 7.8 *γ* 2). For the Persian king's love of money and anything quantifiable see Konstan 1987, 61–70.

Most astounding is Cleomenes' ambivalence in matters of religion.[38] He relies on Delphic prescriptions (6.76, 6.82), and before pursuing a military attack, he asks for permission from a divine statue (6.82). During a campaign, he declines the opportunity to cross a river because he has not obtained favorable omens from the customary sacrifice (6.76). At the same time, Cleomenes' appropriation of Athenian oracles illustrates his tyrannical eagerness to control divine things (5.90.2).[39] He enters temples he is not supposed to enter (5.72.3) and whips a priest who tries to prevent him from performing a sacrifice (6.81). He kills fifty Argives who seek refuge in the grove of the hero Argos by treacherously making them come out, and then kills the rest who are still there by setting fire to the sacred grove itself (6.79).[40] He bribes the prophetess of Apollo at Delphi in order to have the other king Demaratus deposed (6.66.2–3) and chops down the sacred trees in the precinct of the two goddesses at Eleusis (6.73.3).

Cleomenes' end is a mark of his ambivalence. In a fit of madness, he starts smashing his scepter in the face of any Spartiate he happens to meet (6.75.1)—that is, he treats Spartan citizens as slaves. When his relatives restrain him and put him in prison, he obtains a knife from the guard and cuts himself into lengthwise strips from his shins to his belly until he dies (6.65.2–3). He is at the same time the despot who marks the body of his subjects and the Spartan mutilated and turned into a slave by the despot.

Between Leonidas and Cleomenes there stands a whole series of ambivalent kingly figures who in different ways partake of both the Spartan and the monarchical models. Leotychides, who cooperates with Cleomenes in the dishonest deposition of Demaratus and is later caught sitting on the silver he took from the Thessalians as a bribe (6.72), preaches on the sanctity of oaths (6.86).[41] The regent Pausanias is, in the words of the narrator, the author of the "fairest victory of any we have ever known" in the battle of Plataea (9.64.1; cf. 9.78). He himself declares that his only desire is "to please the Spartans by pious deeds and pious words" (9.79.2). The narrative of his actions illustrates how he does not mutilate corpses, he does not know

38. Griffiths 1988, 58–70.

39. See Nagy 1990a, 159–68. Herodotus specifies that the responses taken by Cleomenes from the Acropolis had previously belonged to the Peisistratids, on whose control of oracles see 7.6.3–4.

40. Of seven other holocausts reported by Herodotus, four are the work of monarchical rulers: Pheros (2.111), Polycrates (3.45), Arcesilaus of Cyrene (4.164), and Periander (5.92 η). See Griffiths 1988, 57, n. 9.

41. The Glaucus of the parable in Leotychides' speech, who is punished for his greed by the obliteration of his entire household (86 δ), is analogous to Leotychides himself, whose house is razed to the ground (6.72). The material razing of the house, however, is a specific punishment meted out by the polis against people guilty of basic crimes against the social order, including treason and tyranny. See Connor 1985, 83, 89, 93.

the luxuries of Eastern kings, and he does not—to borrow from Otanes' formulation—"do violence to women."[42] These episodes, however, capitalize on the common knowledge of his later destiny and clash with Herodotus' own two references to it, one mentioning his alleged betrothal to a Persian princess and his desire (ἔρως) to become tyrant of Greece (5.32),[43] and the other qualifying his behavior toward the Greek allies as ὕβρις (8.3.2).[44]

The most important of the intermediate royal figures is Demaratus, the Eurypontid king who is deposed thanks to the machinations of Cleomenes, after "acting out of envy and hatred" toward him (φθόνῳ καὶ ἄγῃ χρεώμενος, narrator's gloss at 6.61.1).[45] In the conclusion of the narrative of his deposition and exile, the narrator praises him as "many times illustrious according to the Lacedaemonians in deeds and counsels" (6.70.3). Mentioned at this point is the unique fact that he once obtained an Olympic victory in the chariot race but conferred the honor on the Spartans—in other words, he renounced a personal distinction that was almost a mark of tyrannical status within the polis.[46] In the same chapter the deposed Demaratus crosses over into the monarchical space, the East, as Hippias and several other tyrannical types in the *Histories* have done before him (6.70.1–2).[47] At the Persian court, on the one hand he cooperates with the Great King,[48] while on the other hand he becomes the expounder of the Spartan way to Xerxes. His are the words we have used as the theoretical description of the Spartan model. The mysterious message by which

42. Pausanias rejects as barbaric the invitation of an Aeginetan to defile the body of Mardonius as vengeance for Xerxes' mutilation of Leonidas' corpse at Thermopylae (9.78–79). He marvels at the furnishings of the Persian camp and compares a Persian and a Spartan dinner (9.82). And he graciously entrusts to the protection of the ephors the former Greek concubine of a rich Persian (9.76).

43. For ἔρως of tyranny see 1.96, 3.53. Herodotus refuses to vouch for the veracity of the story about Pausanias' marriage ("if indeed that story is true"). It is part of the thesis of this chapter, however, that Herodotean representations are made up of partial truths expressed by different voices. According to Evans (1991, 94–103, esp. 101), Herodotus' disclaimers are a sign of his impartial stance as an itinerant oral performer.

44. Cf. Thuc. 1.77, 1.94–96, 1.128–34. The irony in Herodotus' narrative about Pausanias is emphasized by Fornara (1971, 63–66).

45. A different view of Demaratus' ambivalence is expressed by Boedeker (1987b), whose discussion has greatly influenced the thesis of this chapter.

46. For the significance of the Olympic victories, especially in the chariot race, see 5.47, 5.71; 6.103, 6.36, 6.122, 6.125–26. The connection with tyranny is underlined by Nagy (1990a, 186–87).

47. For other departures from Sparta over the question of kingship see n. 28 above. Boedeker (1987, 191–92) identifies a special narrative pattern "of the exiled or alienated Greek who, for his or her own purposes, induces Persian incursions against fellow citizens," and gives a complete list.

48. By helping Xerxes to obtain the throne (7.3) and by advising a Persian attack on Cythera (7.235).

Demaratus announced to the Spartans the imminent Persian invasion, in order "either to do them a favor or to gloat" (narrator's evaluation, 7.239), is another sign of ambivalence.[49]

The behavior of the typical monarch, according to Otanes' description, includes actions of "violence to women." To the despot's desire for power (ἔρως)[50] corresponds his sexual desire, and indulging either one is part of his general tendency to "do what he wants." Herodotus' conception of history precludes a clear-cut separation between the public and the private spheres, which are represented as either parallel or intertwined.[51] In the context of the *Histories*, "doing violence to women" comes to signify interference in the basic unit of any society, the family.[52]

Spartan kings are not immune from this monarchical feature. Cleomenes has dealings with the wife of his guest-friend Isagoras (5.70.1). The kings Demaratus and Ariston are wife-stealers. A particularly interesting Spartan variation on the theme of irregular royal marriages is the story of Anaxandridas (5.39–41). Anaxandridas was happily married but had no heirs. Since he refused to replace his current wife, to whom he was attached, the ephors and gerontes insisted that he must at least take another wife in addition to the one he already had; otherwise the Spartans might decide to depose him. Anaxandridas complied with this second solution, and so he lived having two wives and two households, which was not at all a Spartan thing to do.[53] This violation of custom in the domestic sphere is not caused by unbridled lust and is certainly not the result of the king's being able to do whatever he wants. It is nevertheless the result of kingship and its imperfect integration within the commonwealth. The unsatisfactory compromise between the will of the king and the requirements of the state's constitution produces an irregular marriage in the style of the East, the issue of which is in turn the mad and monarchical Cleomenes.[54]

49. The conveyance of the message itself is in the style of Eastern tyrants and power-seekers. Cf. the secret messages at 1.123.3–4 (Harpagus to Cyrus) and 5.35.3–4 (Histiaeus to Aristagoras). As Nagy (1990a, 169) points out, "in the *Histories* of Herodotus, the very act of writing letters is typical of tyrants and the kind of power they exercise."

50. See n. 43 above; Hartog 1988, 330.

51. Parallel: Croesus' domestic tragedy (1.34–45) anticipates his political downfall. Intertwined: Candaules' violation of his own marriage leads to a change of dynasty (1.8–13).

52. Dewald 1981, 109. For instances of monarchical "violence to women" see (beside Candaules, n. 51 above) 1.61 (Peisistratus), 2.121 (Rhampsinitus), 2.126 (Cheops), 3.31 (Cambyses), 3.50 and 5.92 η 3 (Periander), 9.108–13 (Xerxes). The parallelism between this final instance and the story of Candaules' wife in book 1 (a strong structural indication that wives and marriage connections will figure prominently in the *Histories*) has been discussed by E. Wolff (1964).

53. ποιέων οὐδαμῶς Σπαρτιητικά (5.40.2, narrator's gloss).

54. Causality at some level is merely suggested: The narrative of Anaxandridas' marriage

The third component in Herodotus' representation of Spartan kings is the heroic model, which intensifies the contradiction created by the coexistence of the other two but also helps to explain it. The heroic model is brought to bear first of all through genealogy. In the narrative of Herodotus, as in Spartan tradition, the institution of kingship in Sparta precedes the κόσμος of Lycurgus and the consequent transition to εὐνομίη (1.65). In fact it precedes the foundation of Sparta as a Dorian state. Spartan history, as opposed to the heroic age, begins after the Dorian invasion. The Dorians are a people of pure Hellenic stock, who about two generations after the Trojan War swept down from Northern Greece into the Peloponnese and settled in a large part of it, including Sparta, having subjected the previous population (1.56).[55]

The leaders of these Dorians, from whom the Spartan kings descend, were not themselves considered Dorian. According to a story reported by Herodotus, Cleomenes, during one of his interventions in Athens, went into the inner shrine of the goddess Athena on the acropolis. There he was met by the priestess, who stopped him at the door saying "Stranger from Sparta, do not come into this temple because it is not lawful for Dorians to be here." To this Cleomenes answered: "But I am not Dorian, I am Achaean" (5.72).

Cleomenes is Achaean, not Dorian, because the leaders of the Dorians, ancestors of all Spartan kings, were the great-great-great-grandchildren of the Achaean hero Heracles. Heracles had claims of kingship in the Peloponnese, but he was excluded from it throughout his life by his father's cousin, the Perseid Eurystheus, who ruled in Mycenae. When Heracles died, his sons, persecuted by Eurystheus, fled from the Peloponnese. After three generations and some failed attempts, the descendants of Heracles' son Hyllus managed to return at the head of the Dorians.[56] As descendants of Heracles, the Spartan kings are ethnically different from the Spartan people. Again, just before the section on royal privileges, Herodotus makes a point of remarking that through the mother of Perseus, Danae, daughter of Acrisius, the Spartan kings are Egyptian.[57]

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against custom is shortly followed by that of the birth of Cleomenes (5.41) and by the narrator's first gloss on Cleomenes' madness (5.42.1).

55. See Tigerstedt 1965, 28–36 for the sources and form of the tradition about the Dorians before Herodotus.

56. For Heracles and Eurystheus see *Il.* 19.95–133. For the story of the exile and return see especially Apollod. 2.8 and D.S. 4.57–58. Herodotus mentions the exile of the Heraclids (9.27), their first attempt to conquer the Peloponnese, at which time Hyllus the son of Heracles was killed (9.26), and their final return (1.56). The political importance of Achaean mythology at Sparta is discussed by Huxley (1983, 6–9).

57. 6.53 (cf. 2.91). Perseus was the grandfather of Heracles' mortal father Amphitryon.

Other passages in the *Histories* reveal that the Spartan kings have various other connections with the East and Eastern dynasties.[58] The mythical genealogy, in other words, here cooperates with the monarchical model. It does so, however, by referring the kings of Sparta to a more or less undifferentiated heroic world in which the big ethnic and cultural divide between East and West is either nonexistent or problematic, since heroes move freely between these two spaces, begetting descendants on either side.[59] Moreover, Sparta's close connection with its heroic ancestors through its kings is an aspect of its religiosity and adherence to νόμος. Through Heracles and Perseus the ultimate ancestor of the Spartan kings is Zeus, the protector of all kings.[60] As we have already noted, Herodotus emphasizes that the kings in historical Sparta are also priests of Zeus (6.56.1).

The mythical genealogy produces a heroic model, by which the actions of the historical kings want to be interpreted in terms of heroic behavior. The narrative encourages us to do so by stressing, sometimes in explicit terms, the continuity and analogy between historical times and the heroic age. In his account of the quarrel between Cleomenes and Demaratus, the narrator inserts the Spartan tradition of the beginning of the dual kingship with the twins Eurysthenes and Procles, the sons of Aristodemus, the Heraclid who led the Dorians to Laconia (6.52). Following the Delphic prescription, the Spartans made both brothers kings but gave greater honor to

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Herodotus also adds that according to the Persians, Perseus himself was an Assyrian who became Greek (6.54). Herodotus' narrative implies that the Egyptian origin of the kings partially accounts for the similarities between Spartan and Egyptian customs mentioned at 6.60 and perhaps also for the similarities to other non-Greek cultures noted at 6.58–59. How and Wells ([1928] 1964, 2:87) remark that the extravagant signs of mourning at the funeral of a Spartan king are a vestige of barbarism or a survival from heroic times, and cite *Il.* 18.23 ff. With Hall (1989, 44, 83, 131), we may add the heroic mourning at *Il.* 2.700, 11.393, and 19.284–86, side by side with tragic passages meaning to represent not heroic but Asiatic grief: Aesch. *Pers.* 121–24, 537–83, 909–1077; *Ch.* 23–31, 425–28.

58. Heracles is the eponymous ancestor of the Heraclids of Lydia (1.7) and the genealogical ancestor of the Scythians (4.8–10). Perses, the eponym of the Persians, is the son of Perseus (7.61.3, 7.150.1–2). The origins as well as the cultural and political significance of these myths of foreign ancestry are discussed by Nagy (1990a, 292–303).

59. In the Homeric and archaic traditions, the heroic world appears generally homogeneous. In tragedy, at a time when the Greek-barbarian polarity has become central, the Homeric Trojans tend to be represented as barbarians along with Thracian, Asiatic, and Egyptian mythical figures, including the foreign ancestors of Greek heroes (Cadmus, Pelops, etc.). Greek heroes always count as Greeks, though occasionally their ethnic identity is called into question on the basis of their foreign descent (e.g., Soph. *Aj.* 1228–97). On this question I am much indebted to Hall (1989, esp. 13–14, 19–47, 165–75). Herodotus displays interest in the remote foreign origins of historical Greeks (e.g., 5.57, 5.66.1), but at the same time he declines opportunities to apply contemporary Greek and barbarian ethnic stereotypes to the heroic world (1.1–4; 2.113–15, 2.118–20; 5.58–59).

60. Vernant 1988a, 106.

the one they discovered to be the elder, whom they named Eurysthenes (52.4–7). The narrative ends in a gloss: "Once the children grew to manhood, although they were brothers they quarrelled with one another their whole lives, and those who descend from them continue to do the same" (52.8). The aetiological myth accounts for the institution of the diarchy and the relative prominence of the Agiad king Cleomenes in the sixth century (6.51). It also provides a mythical archetype that explains the behavior of the historical kings, and specifically the quarrel of Cleomenes and Demaratus.[61]

The heroic background of the diarchs does not include only Perseids and Heraclids. The Spartan kings are also genealogically connected with the mythical royal dynasty of Thebes because the mother of Eurysthenes and Procles descended from Polyneices, son of Oedipus (6.52.2). More important, they are the heirs of the other royal family that held the hegemonic kingship in the Peloponnese after the death of the Perseid Eurystheus, the Pelopids from Phrygia (7.8 γ 1, 7.11.4),[62] and of an autochthonous Laconian dynasty whose last exponent is Tyndareus. The Pelopids will replace the line of Tyndareus on the throne of Sparta when Menelaus marries the daughter of Tyndareus, Helen.[63] The brothers of Helen—the two famous twins Castor and Polydeuces—are mythical representatives of the Spartan kings. Herodotus says that when the quarrel between Cleomenes and Demaratus broke out, the Spartans made a law that from then on only one king would lead expeditions abroad while the other would remain in the city, and that "one of the Tyndarids would also be left behind; before that time they both followed the kings on campaign, being summoned for assistance" (5.75.2). Spartan history reproduces myth and affects cult.[64]

That the mythical background produces at the same time a heroic biographical pattern emerges unequivocally in the story of King Demaratus.[65] The mythical Helen is explicitly mentioned in connection with Demaratus' mother, who according to the tradition reported by Herodotus, was so ugly

61. Boedeker 1987, 188. The political motives for the mythical elements in the local Spartan traditions about Cleomenes and Demaratus have been discussed in detail by Ellen S. Greenstein in a paper written for a graduate seminar at the University of Pennsylvania in 1989, "Herodotus and the Creation of Spartan 'Eunomia'."

62. Cf. 7.159. Sparta's claim to the right of leadership in the Peloponnese is partially founded on its kings' being heirs of the Pelopids (see 1.68–69). Although Herodotus does not mention a genealogical connection between Perseids-Heraclids and Pelopids, tradition regarded Pelops as the father of Amphitryon's mother (Hes. fr. 190.6–8 MW; see Nagy 1990a, 119, 299). For the change of dynasty from Perseids to Pelopids (Atreus and Thyestes) in Mycenae see Thuc. 1.9.2; Apollod. 2.11.

63. The traditional genealogy of Tyndareus, not mentioned by Herodotus, is discussed by Calame (1987).

64. Parker 1989, 146–47.

65. Boedeker 1987, 187–88.

as a baby that her nurse would take her every day to the shrine of Helen at Therapne and pray to the goddess to improve her looks. After meeting one day with a mysterious apparition in the neighborhood of the temple, the child started to change and eventually became the most beautiful woman in Sparta (6.61.2–4). She went in marriage to a noble Spartan named Agetus, close friend of king Ariston, but Ariston fell in love with her and took her away from her husband using deception (6.62). In the mythical context in which it appears, this case of irregular marriage, which we would otherwise interpret only on the basis of the monarchical model as "violence done to women," also becomes a reenactment of the abduction of Helen. When we learn a little later (6.65) that the son from this marriage, Demaratus, abducted the bride of his cousin Leotychides—Percalus was her name—we see that action in the same light. The heroic model is superimposed on the monarchical model and competes with it.

The heroic model transforms the story of Demaratus' deposition as well. Cleomenes manages to have Demaratus deposed from the kingship by exploiting the uncertainty of his birth—whether he was the son of king Ariston or of his mother's first husband, the Spartiate Agetus (6.64–66). But through hearsay and reported tales, the narrative proposes other options. There is gossip in Sparta that Demaratus is the son of a servant, the guardian of the mules (6.68), while Demaratus' mother claims that when she became the bride of Ariston, she was visited by the local hero Astrabacus and by her husband on the same night. Like his ancestor Heracles, Demaratus may have an immortal father (6.69). The initial dynastic controversy has been stretched at both ends, and Demaratus' identity is put into question in a fundamental way.[66] As a true heroic figure, he partakes of both the lowest and the highest.[67]

Generalized mythical antecedents and existential paradigms shed a different light on those royal figures that we have examined so far only through the Spartan and monarchical models. They translate the opposing concepts of citizen valor and piety on the one hand and despotic hybris on the other into terms that Greek thought is accustomed to regard as coexisting—heroic excellence and excess. Taken together, the almost antithetical Cleomenes

66. See Burkert 1965 for the political uses of this story, and Nagy 1990a, 336–37, for the mule's connotation of illegitimacy. The name Astrabacus is connected with the term ἀστράβη, "mule saddle," and at the same time the hero is himself a Heraclid of the Agiad family (Paus. 3.16.9). The mysterious status of Spartan royal figures also emerges from the episode in which the identity of Lycurgus is questioned by the Delphic oracle: "I wonder if in prophecy I shall call you a god or a man. But I think rather a god, Lycurgus" (1.65.3).

67. Cf. the Sophoclean Oedipus, who is "equal to the gods" and "equal to nothing" (*OT* 31, 1187–88).

and Leonidas embody these heroic extremes. Cleomenes relives the ambivalence of Heracles, the savior and a follower of the laws of the gods, to whom tradition from Homer to Sophocles also attributes such "unbearable deeds"[68] as defiance against the divine, violence, drunkenness, madness, and finally an excruciating death in which—as in the case of Cleomenes—physical mutilation and disfigurement symbolize a diseased self.[69]

As far as Leonidas is concerned, his heroic descent is emphasized three times in the account of the battle of Thermopylae—once with full genealogy.[70] In this narrative, what starts out as a hoplite battle becomes a heroic battle (7.223–25).[71] Commentators have often observed that Herodotus' notice of the furious melee that raged over the body of Leonidas after his death is a Homeric reference, recalling as it does the fight over the body of Patroclus in the *Iliad*.[72] Leonidas' achievement is κλέος (7.220.2, 7.220.4). This word, otherwise rare in the *Histories*,[73] is almost a technical term in the poetic tradition for the glory of heroes, especially in death. Establishing a connection that is again traditional in Achaean epic, the two occurrences of κλέος in this chapter frame the reference to πένθος in the oracle's prediction that the city shall mourn the death of a king from the stock of Heracles.[74]

To a great extent the heroic analogy we find in the Spartan λόγοι of the *Histories* was already a part of the local traditional stories that Herodotus learned from his oral sources. It derives from the Spartans' view of themselves and from their eagerness to glamorize even discreditable events in their history or camouflage factional interests.[75] But separated from the

68. πολλὰ...ἀτάσθαλα (*h Hom* 15.6 [to Heracles]). This term is used by the Herodotean Otanes for the monarch (3.80.4) but traditionally describes heroic acts of hubris (Nagy 1979, 163).

69. For this tradition see Galinsky 1972, 10–56. According to Myres (1953, 77), Cleomenes in Herodotus is "a pendant to the Sophoclean Ajax."

70. 7.204 (genealogy); 7.208.1, 7.220.4 (oracle). See also the references to events in the life of Heracles connected with the topographical setting of the battle (7.193.2, 7.198.2, 7.216).

71. Loraux 1977, 116.

72. Cf. 7.225.1; *Il.* 17.274–87. See How and Wells [1928] 1964, 2:230.

73. Powell 1938, s.vv. κλέος (four occurrences, of which two refer to Leonidas and one, 9.78.2, to Pausanias' victory at Plataea), ἀκλεής (one occurrence, in the first sentence), ἀκλεῶς (one occurrence, 5.77.1, in reference to Cleomenes' failed expedition to Attica).

74. Nagy 1979, 16–18, 94–103. Nagy shows how κλέος and πένθος occur together in different types of opposition in several passages of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Theogony*. In this Herodotean context, the κλέος that Leonidas achieves for the Spartans, as well as the preservation of Spartan εὐδαιμονίη (7.220.2), compensate for the πένθος of his death (see n. 31 above for the wording of the oracle). Κλέος is specifically the glory conferred by poets and masters of tradition in prose, including Herodotus, as the first sentence of the *Histories* shows. See Nagy 1990a, 221–27.

75. Tigerstedt 1965, 33, 88–92 et passim. Herodotus' sources for Spartan history are surveyed by Jacoby in *RE* suppl. 2:421, 429, 436, 442–43, 456–57, 462–64. For a recent discussion see Evans 1991, 123–26.

purposes for which it was intended and adapted to a Panhellenic context, the heroization of Spartan kings plays a role in Herodotus' interpretation of history. It has the effect of overruling the otherwise assumed antithesis between Greek and non-Greek in the discussion of individual power in the polis. Irrationality and violence undermine the most Hellenic of cities because they are not the exclusive prerogatives of foreigners; they do not come from the outside any more than those virtues that protect the εὐδαιμονίη of the state in times of danger.[76] The contradiction between order and disorder, which the Greek-barbarian polarity serves to express, maintains its validity but is moved within the polis and the individual himself and is reinterpreted as the survival of the remote, preconstitutional past of the Greeks. For Herodotus, the Spartans, whose politeia has preserved a role for their Heraclid kings, show that Greece must live with that legacy, exploit it and control it—a cause of disruption and a source of excellence.

76. In spite of the promising title of its epilogue ("The Polarity Deconstructed"), Hall's study does not explore the consequences of her own observations that "the Greek view of their own distant past had many points of contact with their perception of barbarians" (Hall 1989, 191–92) or the significance of the fact that what she calls "the vocabulary of barbarism" was applied to the representation of Greeks (203–4). The chauvinistic belief of the Greeks in their own superiority goes hand in hand with a profound tendency to self-criticism, and those features they disowned as belonging to the outside, they at the same time also recognized as part of their own temperament. In Herodotus the Greek-barbarian antithesis is several times put into question through the attribution of "Hellenic" attitudes to barbarians and of barbaric actions to Greeks (e.g., 3.80.1–6, 7.136.2, 8.105–6, 9.120.4).