

## Public Decision-Making in Herodotus\*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the language Herodotus uses and the information he gives on public decision-making in various states. He focuses normally on the body with the final right of decision, and his terminology does not always match that used by the state in question. The state about which he is most informative is Sparta, with various references to the ephors, *gerousia* (council of elders), the (not clearly distinguished) Spartiates (full citizens) and *Lakedaimonioi*, and to the Kings. From c. 506 Sparta consulted its allies before committing them to action; in the war against Xerxes there are early mentions of councils of the loyalist Greeks, and then ad hoc councils of war. Many Athenian decisions are mentioned: particularly worthy of discussion are the status of Miltiades' family in the Chersonese and judicial decisions of the early fifth century. Of particular interest in Miletus are the nature of the tyranny, the status of Aristagoras during the Ionian Revolt, and Histiaeus and attitudes towards him. In Samos there was a series of tyrants, a division of opinion in the Ionian Revolt and dealings with the loyalist Greeks in 479. Herodotus also writes of Persian decisions, where the King was an autocrat but consulted courtiers, including exiled Greeks.

**KEYWORDS:** councils, assemblies, tyrants, magistrates, Athens, Sparta, Samos, Miletus, Persia.

Imagine the first passage to occur to most readers in connection with public decision-making in Herodotus would be his remark that Aristagoras of Miletus, when seeking support for the Ionian Revolt, found it easier to mislead 30,000 Athenians than Cleomenes of Sparta — though, to be fair, Cleomenes too might have succumbed if his resolve had not been stiffened by his daughter Gorgo (5.97, cf. for Sparta 5.49–51).



But, before I look at specific instances, two general points. First, S. Hornblower, writing about Thucydides' treatment of Athens, has remarked that he says very little about the council, and has suggested that there was a sinister purpose behind this, to make Athenian decision-making seem more impulsive and irresponsible than it actually was.<sup>1</sup> I accept the fact but not the sinister interpretation: when final decisions were made in the assembly, it is that meeting of the assembly on which Thucydides concentrates, and the council is omitted when it played its normal,

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<sup>1</sup> Hornblower 2009, cf. 2008: 23–31.

probouleutic role and included only when it played an exceptional role, as it did in 420 (Thuc. 5.45.1) and in 411 (Thuc. 8.66.1, 69–70.1). Other Greek states are treated similarly, including Sparta, where the *gerousia* was more powerful than the council in Athens but is never mentioned by Thucydides.<sup>2</sup>

The same applies to Herodotus, which confirms me in my view that there is nothing sinister in Thucydides' treatment. Sparta's *gerousia* is mentioned as a creation of Lycurgus (1.65.5); as joining with the ephors in putting pressure on Anaxandridas to take a second wife, where they threaten a decision by 'the Spartiates' if he does not comply (5.40.1); and as including the two Kings in its membership, where Herodotus seems to have thought but Thuc. 1.20.3 denied that the Kings had two votes each (6.57.5). Athens' council of 500 is not mentioned in connection with Cleisthenes' tribal reorganization (tribes and demes but no mention of the council, 5.69.2); the council that resisted when Cleomenes of Sparta tried to dissolve it is probably Solon's council of 400, not yet transformed into Cleisthenes' 500 (5.72.1–2); and, after that, as in Thucydides, the council is mentioned only when it does something unusual: in 480/79, when Mardonius sent Murychides to offer a deal to Athens, one member, Lycides, wanted to put the offer to the assembly, but in reaction the other members and 'those from outside' lynched him, and their wives went to his house and killed his wife and children (9.5). Presumably Murychides' offer was not put to the assembly.

Elsewhere, Herodotus mentions that in Cyrene, when Arcesilaus III, after killing or exiling his opponents, had fled to Barca, his mother Pheretime exercised his privileges in Cyrene and, inter alia, attended the council (4.165.1). And in 481, before Xerxes' invasion, when Argos had consulted Delphi on how to respond, the envoys from the Greeks who wanted Argos to join in the resistance went to the *bouleuterion* (council house). The council stated the conditions on which Argos would join in, the envoys gave their reply to what they were told in the council and 'the Argives' indignantly told the envoys to be gone from Argos' territory before sunset (7.148.3–149.3). In Greek cities with the usual structure of council and assembly, it would be normal practice for envoys to go first to the council; how far the council could respond to the envoys without reference to the assembly would depend on the relations between the two bodies in the city in question. In view of Herodotus' lack of similar references to the council in other states, I assume that his mention of the council here is intentional and not just casual. Macan and How and Wells both remark on the council's power here, and How and Wells suggest that it may be the 'eighty' rather than the 'council' mentioned as swearing to the treaty with Athens in 420 (Thuc. 5.47.9).<sup>3</sup> But it now seems that, in spite of what Herodotus says about the aftermath of the battle of Sepeia, c. 494 (6.83.1), Argos remained oligarchic until a major reorganization in the 460s, so we should probably accept that in 481 Argos had a council which could indeed deal with the Greeks' envoys without reference to the assembly.<sup>4</sup> An Argive assembly is attested

<sup>2</sup> Cf. briefly Rhodes 2015: 31–2; in detail, Scafuro (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Macan 1908: i. 1.202 on 7.148.18, How and Wells 1912: ii. 188 on 7.149.1.

<sup>4</sup> Gehrke 1985: 24–6, 361–3 separated a liberation of slaves after Sepeia (cf. Diod. Sic. 10.26) from a later enfranchisement of *perioikoi* and change to democracy, which he dated 490–488 (i.e. before the support for Aegina of Hdt. 6.92, which he dated 488, though I should date that

in two inscriptions of the first half of the fifth century, but dates c. 480, c. 475 or later have been proposed for these.<sup>5</sup>

Surprisingly, *probouleusis* (prior consideration) does appear in Xenophon's *Hellenica*, at Athens, though not in any other city.<sup>6</sup> After the battle of Arginusae in 406, the generals who returned to Athens and reported to the council were imprisoned on the orders of the council. When darkness fell before a first meeting of the assembly could decide, it ordered the council to submit a *probouleuma* to a subsequent meeting, which was then presented with the *probouleuma* of Callixenus, and on a first vote it preferred the alternative motion of Euryptolemus. That vote was challenged, and on a second vote it condemned the generals in accordance with the *probouleuma*.<sup>7</sup> The council is mentioned on various later occasions. In 405/4, before the Athenians finally accepted Sparta's peace terms, when Archedtratus proposed in the council that the terms should be accepted, he was arrested and there was a decree — Xenophon does not say whether of the council or of the assembly — that nobody should propose this (*Xen. Hell.* 2.2.15). In 371 the council was in session on the Acropolis when a herald arrived from the Thebans to announce their victory over the Spartans at Leuctra, and it rebuffed the herald without consulting the assembly (*Xen. Hell.* 6.4.20). After that, Xenophon reports two meetings of the council and assembly. In winter 370/69, when the Thebans invaded the Peloponnese, the Athenians 'held an assembly in accordance with a resolution of the council', envoys from various states spoke and the assembly 'voted to rally round with full force' in support of Sparta (*Xen. Hell.* 6.5.33–49). And in summer 369, when Athens and Sparta made a formal alliance, the assembly was presented with a *probouleuma* recommending that Sparta should command on land and Athens at sea, but a speech by Cephisodotus persuaded it to decide instead that the whole command should alternate every five days (*Xen. Hell.* 7.1.1–14).

The *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* gives us an intriguing episode from 396, when some Athenians were beginning to contemplate an end to the dependence on Sparta imposed at the end of the Peloponnesian War: a man called Demaenetus, 'not by a resolution of the people' but 'having conferred secretly with the council, it was said', set out with a trireme from Athens to join Conon in Cyprus. When this was discovered, there was a great commotion; the council called an assembly and pretended to know nothing about the matter. Opinions were divided but the assembly reported the incident to the Spartan harmost on Aegina, and he tried but failed to catch Demaenetus off the east coast of Attica (*Hell. Oxy.* 9, 11 Chambers).

But I return to Herodotus. I make one other general point here, about his language. For an assembly, a mass meeting of citizens, he uses *halie* four times,

episode before 490). Piérart 1997: 321–51, and in Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 604, retains Gehrke's distinction between the aftermath of Sepeia and the change to democracy, but dates the latter to the 460s.

<sup>5</sup> IG IV 554 = *Nomima* i 107; SEG XIII 239.

<sup>6</sup> See Rhodes 2019: 46–51.

<sup>7</sup> Generals reported to council and were imprisoned, *Xen. Hell.* 1.7.3; first assembly commissioned *probouleuma*, 7; subsequent assembly eventually condemned generals in accordance with *probouleuma*, 9–34.

of Persia (in a story about the rise of Cyrus), Miletus, Thebes and Sparta,<sup>8</sup> but uses *ekklēsie* only once, of Samos (3.142.2: ‘an *ekklēsie* of all the *astoi*’).

For decisions of public bodies and individuals he mostly uses two verbs, *dokeein* (‘to seem good’), which is the commonest in this sense both in Herodotus and in inscribed decrees,<sup>9</sup> and *handanein* (‘to please’), which he uses particularly with reference to Sparta (occasionally), Thera and Thera’s African colonies, although they did not use *handanein* in their inscribed decrees, while some states, notably those of Crete, did.<sup>10</sup> That is, *handanein* seems for Herodotus simply to be a variant used for variety’s sake, and it does not reflect the usage of the states in connection with which he uses it.



To look at individual instances, I shall group together the decisions of particular states. The state about which Herodotus is most informative is not Athens but Sparta.

There are various occasions when Herodotus mentions the ephors. When the Samian opponents of the tyrant Polycrates appealed to Sparta, they went to the *archontes*, and I assume that Herodotus means the ephors. This was the occasion when the Samians spoke at length and were rebuked by the Spartans for wasting words, but the episode ends with ‘it was decided to give support’, and that decision should have been made by the assembly after *probouleusis* by the *gerousia* (3.46).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 490 the runner from Athens went to the *archontes* and addressed them as *Lakedaimonioi*; ‘they’ decided to go in support, but could not go before the full moon — after which a force of *Lakedaimonioi* went to Marathon and saw the bodies (Hdt. 6.106, 120). Again I suspect that they went to the ephors but that the decision to support Athens should have been taken by the assembly after *probouleusis* by the *gerousia* (unless the assembly’s decision had been taken earlier, and all that was needed was that the ephors should ‘proclaim the campaign’, as we shall see below). Earlier, when Maeandrius fled to Sparta, he tried to bribe King Cleomenes; Cleomenes (less high-handed at the beginning of his reign than he became later)<sup>12</sup> went to the ephors and told them that Maeandrius should be gone from the Peloponnese, ‘and they complied and

<sup>8</sup> 1.125.2, 5.29.2, 5.79.2, 7.134.2 (on the last cf. below). There is no reason to think that that reflects local usage.

<sup>9</sup> 1.3.2 Greeks of legendary period, 19.2 Alyattes of Lydia, 24.4 etc. Corinthians, 123.4 Hargagus the Mede, 141.4 etc. Ionians, 172.2 Caunians, 2.148.1 etc. Egyptian Kings, 3.17.2 etc. Persians, 41.2 etc. Samians, 46.2 etc. Spartans, 4.3.4 etc. Scythians, 11.4 Cimmerians, 160.3 Libyans, 5.77.1 etc. Athenians, 6.77.3 Argives, 86.a.5 a Milesian, 138.4 Pelasgians, 7.145.1 etc. Greeks resisting Persian invasion, 8.31 Thessalians, 9.74.1 Sophanes of Decelea, 87.2 Thebans.

<sup>10</sup> 1.133.4 individual Persians, 151.3 Aeolians, 3.45.1, Samians, 4.145.5 and 6.106.3 Spartans, 4.153 Theraeans, 201.2 Barcaeans and Persians, and a few passages where the sense is ‘pleased’ rather than ‘decided’. See Buck 1955: 126 §162.3.

<sup>11</sup> How and Wells 1912: i. 268 on 3.46.1 thought they went to the Kings, *gerousia* and ephors; Asheri (in Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella 2007: 444 on 3.46.1), to the Kings and the ephors. Neither commentary considers who made the final decision.

<sup>12</sup> Hornblower and Pelling 2017: 240–1.

proclaimed him out' (3.148: Herodotus' only use of ἐκκηρύσσειν). The impression which Herodotus gives is that Maeandrius took Cleomenes to be the man who mattered, and Cleomenes' rejection of him was definitive, but it was the ephors as executive officials whose job it was formally to order him to go.

Earlier, when Anaxandridas' wife did not bear him a son, it was the ephors who told him to marry another wife. When he refused to do that, the ephors and the *gerousia* told him to keep his wife but marry a second as well, or else the Spartiates would take some decision. He did that; his second wife gave birth to Cleomenes. After that, his first wife became pregnant, and the ephors sat in when she gave birth to Dorieus (5.39–41). In the other royal family two wives had been unable to bear a son to Ariston; he contrived to take over Agetus' wife, and she bore a son, Demaratus. The Spartiates πανδημεί ('in full force') had prayed for him to have a son; when the child was born, Ariston was with the ephors, apparently in an official context, and he counted the months and reckoned that the child could not be his. Later he did acknowledge Demaratus, but the remark was remembered, and when Leotychidas was prompted by Cleomenes to challenge Demaratus, he cited the remark and called the ephors who had heard it as witnesses. The Spartiates decided to consult Delphi, and the Pythia, corrupted by Cleomenes, pronounced that Demaratus was not Ariston's son (6.61–6). Cleomenes, after his failure to take Argos (c. 494), was brought before the ephors: they arranged a trial, at which he gave a religious explanation, and 'in saying that he was judged by the Spartiates to be saying what was credible and reasonable, and he escaped his prosecutors by far' (6.82). In all these cases, the ephors seem to be involved from the beginning when questions arise about a King. They can work with the *gerousia*, as in the case of Anaxandridas; mentions of the Spartiates probably refer to the assembly, presided over by the ephors, which had its business prepared by the *gerousia*, but whose right to have the last word was important when the authorities were not unanimous.

In 479, when the Athenians wanted the Spartans to venture north of the Isthmus of Corinth once more, they sent messengers to Sparta, who went to the ephors and spoke to them. The ephors delayed replying from day to day; when Chileus of Tegea warned them of the risk of letting Athens go over to the Persians, during the night they sent out a force under Pausanias as regent for Plistarchus (and he took a relative as fellow commander). The next morning, when the Athenians went back to the ephors and did threaten to go over to the Persians, they told the Athenians that this force was on its way (9.6–11). Herodotus writes as if the ephors acted on their own: in fact it appears from Xenophon's *Hellenica* that decisions to go to war, and within the war to send out a particular campaign and to appoint its commander, were taken by the *polis*, that is, by the assembly after *probouleusis* by the *gerousia*. It was the responsibility of the ephors to φρουρὰν φαίνειν, proclaim the campaign.<sup>13</sup> In this case, it must already have been decided that Leotychidas was to command at sea and Pausanias on land,<sup>14</sup> and probably it was within the power of the ephors to decide when Pausanias and his army should go out.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.23; and cf. Xen. *Lac.* 11.2: see Rhodes 2019: 52–3.

<sup>14</sup> Leotychidas' setting out with the Greek fleet, at first simply to Aegina, was mentioned in 8.131.

The last appearance of the ephors was after the battle of Plataea, when a woman from Cos, defecting from the Persian side, made a supplication to Pausanias. He accepted her supplication, entrusted her to the ephors who were present, and afterwards at her request sent her to Aegina (9.76) — and this fits something we are told in Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, that when a King went out on campaign two of the ephors accompanied him, not to interfere, unless the King asked them to do so, but to observe what everybody did and to 'ensure decorum among' (σωφρονίζουσιν) them all (Xen. *Lac.* 13.5).

For decisions of the Spartan assembly, Herodotus seems not to have been careful to distinguish between the Spartiates, the full citizens who constituted the assembly, and the *Lakedaimonioi*, the larger body of free men which included the *perioikoi*. We have noticed that the ephors threatened a decision of the Spartiates if Anaxandridas did not take a second wife, the Spartiates had prayed for a son for Ariston, the Spartiates decided to consult Delphi when Leotychidas challenged Demaratus' legitimacy, and Cleomenes' explanation of his failure to capture Argos was accepted by the Spartiates.<sup>15</sup> Dorieus asked the Spartiates for colonists to take to Libya (5.42.2); the Spartiates are also mentioned as sending Leonidas to Thermopylae without waiting for the Carneia and intending to go in full force after the festival (7.206), and as deciding after Plataea that the bravery of Aristodemus did not count because he was the survivor of Thermopylae who had that disgrace to wipe out (9.71).

But more often Herodotus writes of the *Lakedaimonioi*, though the Spartiates creep in from time to time. It was the *Lakedaimonioi* who condemned Lichas on a false charge so that he could go to Tegea and obtain the bones of Orestes (1.68), who made an alliance with Croesus of Lydia (1.69), who decided simply to send a single ship when the Ionians appealed after Cyrus' conquest of Lydia (1.152.1–153.1),<sup>16</sup> who in the legendary past had dealt with the Minyans expelled from Lemnos by the Pelasgians (4.145–8),<sup>17</sup> who made Cleomenes rather than Dorieus King after the death of Anaxandridas (5.42.2), who, after their failed attempt to overthrow Cleisthenes' régime in Athens, proposed to their allies that they should reinstate Hippias (5.91),<sup>18</sup> who, again in the legendary past, had planned to make the elder son of Aristodemus King (6.53),<sup>19</sup> and who pursued Demaratus when he fled from Sparta (6.70). The court that condemned Leotychidas when he took bribes in Thessaly after the Persian War is not indicated (6.72), but the court that tried him when the Aeginetans complained after the downfall of Cleomenes was convened by the *Lakedaimonioi* (6.85).<sup>20</sup> In 519, the Plataeans offered themselves to Cleomenes and the *Lakedaimonioi* when they were in the vicinity, and the *Lakedaimonioi* advised them to appeal rather to Athens (6.108.2–4). After the Persian Wars, when the Spartiates had a run of unsuccessful sacrifices,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. above: 5.40.1, 6.63.3, 66.1, 82.2.

<sup>16</sup> But the Ionians' speaker tried to attract as large an audience of Spartiates as he could, and the herald sent to Cyrus was a Spartan herald.

<sup>17</sup> But the Minyans took as wives daughters of the leading Spartiates.

<sup>18</sup> But the Spartiates addressed the allies.

<sup>19</sup> But the Spartiates took Panites' advice and watched to see how the mother treated the twins.

<sup>20</sup> But Thearides said the Spartiates had judged in anger.

it was the *Lakedaimonioi* who held frequent meetings of the assembly and made a proclamation calling for volunteers to go to Persia to atone for the killing of Darius' heralds (7.134.2) — frequent meetings, perhaps because it proved difficult to find a solution which commanded sufficient support.

To continue: it was the *Lakedaimonioi* who honoured Themistocles after Salamis (8.124).<sup>21</sup> When Alexander of Macedon went from Mardonius to Athens, the *Lakedaimonioi* sent messengers, the Athenians delayed replying to Alexander until the *Lakedaimonioi* could hear their reply, the 'men from Sparta' said that they had been sent by the *Lakedaimonioi*, and the Athenians said they could understand the fear that they might go over to Persia but it was a misjudgement of them (8.140–4). The people of Decelea in Attica, because of their action in the legendary period, have ἀτελείη τε καὶ προεδρίη ('immunity and front seats') in Sparta, but Herodotus does not specify which body granted that (9.73).

Contrasted with this picture of decision-making by the Spartiates or *Lakedaimonioi* is the report that c. 506, after Cleisthenes' reforms in Athens, King Cleomenes 'raised an army from the whole Peloponnese [i.e. from Sparta's alliance, the Peloponnesian League], without saying what its purpose was': the purpose was clear enough for the Boeotians and Chalcidians to attack Attica too, though the specific purpose alleged by Herodotus, to make Isagoras tyrant, may not have been stated. Cleomenes was accompanied on the campaign by his fellow King, Demaratus; Herodotus says nothing about the mechanism by which the Spartan army was sent out under the joint command of the two Kings, and concentrates on the summons to the allies. It is not clear whether at that date Cleomenes had a formal right to call on the allies or did so merely by force of personality, or whether this has simply been invented to help account for the desertions of the Corinthians and Demaratus.<sup>22</sup> 'As a result of this difference', Herodotus goes on to say, 'a law was enacted at Sparta that it should not be permitted to both Kings to accompany an army when it set out' (5.74–5) — and the law is presumably to be attributed to the assembly after *probouleusis* by the *gerousia*. The law was challenged when Demaratus incited Aegina to refuse Cleomenes' demand for hostages after it had acceded to Darius' demand for earth and water, and Cleomenes in response did not enforce the law but arranged for Demaratus to be deposed and succeeded by Leotychidas. The two Kings together took hostages from Aegina to Athens; after Cleomenes had come to a grisly end, the Aeginetans complained to Sparta, Leotychidas was sent to ask Athens to return the hostages, and then Athens in turn refused to give up the hostages to only one King (6.50, 65.1, 73, 86. *init.*).

Another change that seems to have resulted from the fiasco of c. 506 was that thereafter the allies were consulted before being called to take action, but were committed to what the majority decided 'unless there was something from gods and heroes to prevent it' (Thuc. 5.30.3). Thus, when the Spartans wanted to reinstate Hippias in Athens, they called a meeting of their allies: Socles of Corinth led the opposition, 'all the others adopted the Corinthian's position', and so the matter was ended (5.91.1–94.1). In the Greek alliance to resist Xerxes' invasion in 480, Herodotus reports meetings of representatives (*probouloi*), probably at

<sup>21</sup> But on his departure he was given an escort of Spartiates.

<sup>22</sup> De Ste. Croix 1972: 339 believed that at this date Sparta did have such a right.

the Isthmus of Corinth in the autumn of 481 and certainly there before and after the expedition to Thessaly in the spring of 480 (7.145, 172, 175.1). Envoys were sent in 481 to other states, which it was hoped would join; and when Argos' price for joining was a thirty-year peace treaty and an equal share in the command, the Spartans said they would consult 'the larger number', presumably the Spartan assembly, about a treaty but they could not give Argos more than a one-third share in the command (7.149.1–2).

After spring 480 no further such meetings are mentioned, but we hear of many councils of war in situ, where the Spartan commander consulted the commanders of the other contingents.<sup>23</sup> A recurring motif in this war is that the Greeks are frightened before engaging but then proceed to fight bravely. For instance, at Thermopylae, when Xerxes was approaching, the Greeks deliberated about withdrawal: 'the other Peloponnesians' wanted to retire to the Isthmus of Corinth, but when the Phocians and Locrians objected, Leonidas 'voted to stay there' and to appeal for reinforcements. As commander, he got his way (7.207). When the Persians used the mountain path and rendered the Greek position untenable, opinions were divided; the upshot was that most escaped while they could, but Leonidas and the Spartans stayed, together with the Thebans and Thespians. Herodotus' opinion was that those who escaped did not desert but were dismissed by Leonidas, while the Thespians chose to stay but the Thebans were kept as hostages: Leonidas died, so nobody will have been able to obtain his version (7.219–22).

Before the battle of Salamis, Herodotus gives us a whole series of Greek councils, at which Themistocles has to argue again and again for staying at Salamis and not withdrawing to the Peloponnese. When the fleet had assembled, it debated where to fight: the Spartan commander Eurybiadas invited τὸν βουλούμενον ('whoever wished') to state his opinion, and the majority preferred the Isthmus. After the Persians had captured the Acropolis, the Greeks decided to withdraw to the Isthmus and some started preparing to leave. After that, Mnesiphilus warned Themistocles of the danger, and he persuaded the Spartan Eurybiadas to call a third council. It met during the night, and Themistocles threatened an Athenian departure to the west and persuaded Eurybiadas to stay. Following the arrival of the Persian fleet there was yet another council, and Themistocles, opposed by all the Peloponnesians, left the meeting and sent Sicinnus with his message, to incite Xerxes to attack before the Greeks could leave Salamis (8.49, 56, 57–64, 74–5). And then came the battle, in which the Greeks fought bravely and successfully. Realistically, once the argument for staying had been made and prevailed, it ought not to have needed to be repeated; but the recurrent panics and debates heightened the great success when it came.

Themistocles features again in a debate after the battle. The Greeks pursued the departing Persian fleet as far as Andros without catching it, and held a debate there. Themistocles wanted to go on to the Hellespont and destroy Xerxes' bridges; Eurybiadas thought Xerxes should be allowed to return to Asia, and the

<sup>23</sup> For instance at Thermopylae, when the Greeks learned that the Persians were taking the mountain route to their rear. Opinions were divided and some fled to their cities, but others stayed with Leonidas and the Spartans: 7.219.2.



other Peloponnesian generals agreed; Themistocles then defended to the Athenians the view that had been opposed to his, and sent Sicinnus to Xerxes again to tell him that Themistocles had prevented the Greeks from sailing to destroy his bridges, so paving the way for his own fleeing to the Persians later (8.108–10). Here improbability is piled on improbability: that Themistocles should pose as champion of the view opposed to his, that he should expect Xerxes to trust a second message from Sicinnus when the first had led to his defeat at Salamis, and that he could foresee in 480 his later desire to flee to the Persians.



For Athens, many decisions are reported; as I noted above, the council's part in the decision-making process is not mentioned except for the occasion in 480/79 when it reacted angrily to the mission of Murychides and presumably did not put his offer to the assembly. A matter often discussed is the departure of the elder Miltiades to rule over the Dolonci in the Chersonese: Herodotus represents it as a private venture of Miltiades, 'since he was irritated by the régime of Pisistratus and wanted to be out of the way', but it was in some sense a public matter, for which he 'took on all of the Athenians who were willing to share in the expedition', and when the younger Miltiades went to take over he 'was sent to the Chersonese in a trireme by the Pisistratids to take over the affairs' (6.35.3–36.1, 39.1). It may well have suited the elder Miltiades to leave Athens, but clearly his mission made the Chersonese an outpost of Pisistratid Athens. Similarly, when Dorieus of Sparta left to get out of the way of his stepbrother Cleomenes, he went not as an individual in a huff but on officially sanctioned expeditions (5.42.2–43: cf. above). When the younger Miltiades led his expedition against Paros in 489, Herodotus says that 'he asked the Athenians for seventy ships and a force and money, not stating which land he was going to campaign against, but saying that he would enrich them if they followed him' (6.132). This recalls Cleomenes' summoning the Peloponnesians against Athens c. 506; as in the case of Cleomenes, it is perhaps intended to prepare us for the disastrous outcome. It is unlikely to be true, and the contrast of a pretext (*prophasis*, *proschema*) with a personal motive (6.133.1) suggests that Paros was publicly declared as the objective.

There is a point of uncertainty concerning the three judicial decisions reported in Book 6: when Phrynichus distressed the Athenians with his tragedy *The Capture of Miletus*, 'the Athenians' fined him 1,000 drachmae, and 'they prescribed that nobody should ever stage that play'; before Marathon, when Miltiades returned from the Chersonese, 'his enemies ... brought him before a court and prosecuted him for his tyranny in Chersonese', but he was acquitted; and after Marathon, when Miltiades' expedition to Paros ended in failure, Xanthippus 'brought him before the *demos* on a capital charge, prosecuting him on the grounds of deceiving the Athenians'. The *demos* did not condemn him to death but did fine him fifty talents (6.21.2, 104.2, 136). These are three of six Athenian trials held in the early fifth century for which the procedure is debatable (the other three are the condemnation of Hipparchus, son of Charmus, and of Themistocles, and the acquittal of Cimon). Rhodes has suggested that all of Herodotus' cases may have been brought to a court, perhaps the undivided *eliaia* (the Spartiates

as an assembly), when the losing party in a case brought originally to an official exercised his right of appeal; Hansen does not discuss the case of Phrynichus but regards the other five as instances of the legal procedure of *eisangelia*.<sup>24</sup>



One other city worth noticing is Miletus.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps in the sixth century it suffered from *stasis* for two generations, and then invited Paros to send ‘rectifiers’ (καταρτιστήρες): they inspected the territory, and then called an assembly at which they instructed the Milesians to accept the government of those whose own lands were well tended (5.28–9). By the time of Darius’ Scythian campaign, c. 514, Miletus was under the rule of a pro-Persian tyrant, Histiaeus (4.137–42). Herodotus consistently regards him as the ‘real’ tyrant of Miletus even after he had gone elsewhere, and Aristagoras as his deputy (*epitropos*) (5.30.2, 106.1, 4, 5, cf. 6.1.1); but that I think is to make too regularly institutional a phenomenon of tyranny. Aristagoras in turn appointed a deputy when he went to Myrcinus, and Histiaeus appointed a deputy in Byzantium when he returned from there to the Aegean (5.126.1, 6.26.1). Aristagoras embarked on the Ionian Revolt through fear that after the failure of the campaign against Naxos — which he had instigated — he would be deprived of his ‘kingship’ of Miletus (5.35.1). He began by ‘in theory’ (*logoi*) resigning his tyranny and creating *isonomia* (equality before the law) in Miletus, and securing the deposition of the tyrants of the other cities (5.37.2–38),<sup>26</sup> but until he departed to Myrcinus he retained some kind of commanding position (5.98–9, 103.1). Indeed, Herodotus calls him ‘tyrant of Miletus’ on his arrival in Sparta to seek help there, and makes him call himself ‘tyrant of Miletus’ when he invites the deported Paeonians to return home (5.49.1, 98.2).<sup>27</sup>

Herodotus represents the Ionian Revolt as the personal venture of Aristagoras, who began by deliberating μετὰ τῶν στασεωτέων (‘with the dissidents’ or perhaps ‘with his own partisans’), and ‘they’ decided to revolt (5.36). Similarly, before he went to Myrcinus he deliberated with his partisans and various proposals were made (5.124–6), but we also have to accommodate the Ionian *koinon* (league), and to estimate how far the revolt was a venture of the *koinon* rather than of Aristagoras. The *koinon* was first mentioned at the time of Cyrus’ conquest of Lydia, when the Ionians, whose twelve cities shared a sanctuary of Poseidon at the Panionion on Mycale, met there and decided to appeal to Sparta — with the exception of Miletus on that occasion, since Miletus had converted its special relationship with Croesus to a special relationship with Cyrus (1.141–8). Those meetings continued, and on another occasion Bias of Priene proposed that they should all migrate to Sardinia, while Thales of Miletus proposed that they should not physically migrate but instead make a political synoecism centred on Teos — but

<sup>24</sup> See Rhodes 1979: 104–5 (believing that before Ephialtes’ reform *eisangeliai* were tried by the Areopagus), Hansen 1975: 19, 69–71 nos. 1–5.

<sup>25</sup> See Gorman 2001: 87–145.

<sup>26</sup> λόγῳ doubted by A.H. Griffiths *ap.* Hornblower 2013, Wilson 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Gorman 2001: 140–1 suggests that he was appointed to a commanding position by the Ionian *koinon*, but that is not what Herodotus thought.

neither of those things happened (1.170). The *koinon* next appeared, before Aristagoras went to Myrcinus, when the Ionian Revolt spread to Cyprus, the Cyprians appealed to the Ionians, and ‘the Ionians without spending long in deliberation came with a large mission’. The Cyprians invited the Ionians to choose whether to fight on land (and let the Cyprians use their ships) or at sea, and they replied that they had been sent by the *koinon* of the Ionians to guard the sea (5.108–9).

When Histiaeus returned from Susa, was distrusted by Artaphernes in Sardis and therefore went to Chios, he was first arrested by the Chians but persuaded them that he was on their side and was released. Then, according to Herodotus, he was questioned by ‘the Ionians’ about his advice to Aristagoras to revolt, and replied with the alleged plan to exchange the populations of Ionia and Phoenicia (6.2–3). A formal meeting of Ionian delegates at this point is unlikely, and it may be that here ‘the Ionians’ is a careless slip by Herodotus for ‘the Chians’. One more meeting of the *koinon* is attested, when the Persians were striking back, and the *koinon* decided to leave Miletus to defend itself on land while the combined navy was to go to Lade and prevent Miletus from being blockaded by sea as well as by land (6.7 with 9.1). There were then *agorai* (markets) among the forces assembled at Lade, and it was at one of those that Dionysius of Phocaea offered himself as trainer and was accepted (6.11.1–12.1). We cannot be sure how far Herodotus’ focus on the personal involvement of Aristagoras and Histiaeus is misleading, but for the revolt to have happened the *koinon* must at least have been willing to go along with Aristagoras when he turned against the Persians.



Another city that requires us to unravel the interaction between tyrants and people is Samos.<sup>28</sup> In the 530s and 520s, Samos prospered under the tyrant Polycrates, and ‘captured many of the islands, and also many cities on the mainland’ (Hdt. 3.39, 60, cf. 122.2: I need not discuss here whether Polycrates’ reign in fact began earlier, or whether predecessors’ achievements have been attributed to him).<sup>29</sup> He sent to fight for the Persian King Cambyses’ men, whom he did not want back in Samos. They went to Sparta and asked for support against Polycrates, Sparta and Corinth attacked Samos but without success, and the dissident Samians then had further adventures (3.44–8, 54–9). Oroetes, the Persian governor of Sardis, enticed Polycrates to Sardis and had him killed (3.120–5). Polycrates had made Maeandrius his deputy (*epitropos*) in Samos, and Maeandrius convened an assembly, at which he said that he wanted to give the Samians freedom and resign the tyranny while keeping some privileges, but when one leading citizen attacked him for that, he changed his mind, stayed in power and imprisoned his opponents. Polycrates’ brother Syloson met Darius in Cambyses’ entourage in Egypt and Darius sent a Persian force to install Syloson. While originally this was done without opposition, Maeandrius escaped, his brother led an attack on the Persians and the

<sup>28</sup> See Shipley 1987: 68–109.

<sup>29</sup> Prima facie his reign began c. 533 (Eusebius: see Mosshammer 1979: 290–304) and ended c. 522 (3.120–5).

Persians reacted violently before handing over the devastated island to Syloson. Maeandrius now appealed to Sparta, but his bribes failed to gain support from Cleomenes (3.139–49). We do not know what became of Maeandrius; by the time of Darius' Scythian campaign, c. 514, Syloson had been succeeded by his son Aeaces (4.138.2).

Aeaces was one of the tyrants deposed at the beginning of the Ionian Revolt (5.37.2–38, 6.9.2, neither passage mentioning Aeaces, 6.13). Before the battle of Lade, the Persians tried to use the ex-tyrants to win over their cities, and originally that failed, but after seeing the resistance to the training régime of Dionysius of Phocaea, the Samian generals did desert, and were followed by other contingents. The commanders of eleven Samian ships, however, disobeyed their generals and refused to desert, in return for which the *koinon* (community) of the Samians afterwards set up a *stèle* commemorating their loyalty to the cause (6.9.2–10, 13, 14.2–3). After the battle the propertied Samians, disapproving of the desertion, decided not to wait for the reinstatement of Aeaces, and accepted an invitation to the Ionians from the people of Zancle in Sicily to go and colonise Kale Akte there, and in collusion with Anaxilas of Rhegium and Hippocrates of Gela, they actually seized Zancle (6.22–3). That is as far as Herodotus takes their story, but in fact after seven years Anaxilas expelled them, resettled the city and changed its name to Messana.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, in Samos Aeaces was reinstated and the city was not damaged (6.25).

Samos fought on the Persian side in 480, and a man called Theomestor was made tyrant after distinguishing himself at Salamis (8.85.2). In 479, three Samians went to the Greek fleet at Delos without the knowledge of the Persians and Theomestor, to urge it to advance to Asia Minor, and on behalf of Samos were admitted to the Greek alliance (9.90.1–92.1). In Samos, 500 Athenians captured by Xerxes the previous year were released and sent home (9.99.2) — and that can hardly have happened without Theomestor's knowledge. At Mycale, the Samians on the Persian side were disarmed and did what they could to help the Greeks (9.103.2). After the battle the Greeks returned to Samos, held a council at which the Athenians successfully opposed a suggestion that the Ionians should be transported from Asia Minor to somewhere safer, and the Samians and other islanders were formally admitted to the Greek alliance (9.106).



Finally, the Persians. Herodotus knew that the Persian King was a powerful monarch who did not need to have his plans approved by assemblies. But there is one odd episode. When the young Cyrus had discovered his parentage and was living in Persia, Harpagus, who had been punished by the Median King for failing

<sup>30</sup> Thuc. 6.4.6; a different, and badly confused, account is found at Paus. 4.23.5–6 and the change of name mentioned in a passage not coordinated with this at Hdt. 7.164. Zancle issued Samian-type coins for seven years: Kraay 1976: 207, 213–14, with pls. 44–5 nos. 767–84; Barron 1999: 45 n. 15. Barron makes the seven years 494/3–488/7, and infers from coins found in the east that some men then returned to Samos.

to have the infant Cyrus killed, sent a message to Cyrus to incite him to head a Persian revolt against the Medes. Cyrus summoned an assembly (*halie*) of the Persians, and read out a document he had written, stating that King Astyages had appointed him general of the Persians. He then gave them samples of both a hard life and a luxurious life, and promised to lead them in a war for liberation and a luxurious life (1.123.1–127.1).<sup>31</sup> Several peoples were persuaded to join in, so that it is hard to envisage the assembly or the subsequent life samples: How and Wells do not comment; Asheri suggests that ‘when he became the vassal-king of Anšan Cyrus may have led a parade of the multi-national Median army’; Briant expresses general scepticism about the story of Cyrus and his challenge to the Medes.<sup>32</sup> But this story of an assembly and the two life samples looks more appropriate to a Greek city state than a large kingdom.

The King did discuss policy with those around him. According to Herodotus, the succession to Darius was disputed between Artobarzanes, the eldest of all his sons, and Xerxes, the eldest of his sons by Cyrus’ daughter Atossa: Herodotus attributes Xerxes’ prevailing to the arrival of Demaratus, with a Spartan view that a son born after the father’s accession took precedence, and to the influence of Atossa (7.2–4).<sup>33</sup> In fact it is likely that Xerxes had already been designated heir before Demaratus arrived at the Persian court, and Atossa was important — in the royal household but not in affairs of state — as the mother of the heir rather than vice versa. But it is presumably true that distinguished Greeks who arrived at the Persian court were used by the King when questions concerning the Greeks arose (though only then). Histiaeus of Miletus is represented as an honoured if compulsory guest at Darius’ court, trusted by him, apart from one moment of suspicion, but not trusted by other Persians (5.11.2, 23–4, 106–7, 6.1–5, 26–30).<sup>34</sup> Such Greeks could accompany the King or other commanders on expeditions, as Hippias of Athens accompanied Datis and Artaphernes to Marathon (5.96, 6.94.1, 102, 107), and Demaratus of Sparta accompanied Xerxes to Greece (6.70, 7.101–5, 209, 234–7, 8.65).<sup>35</sup>

The invasion of Greece in 480 was a project Xerxes inherited from Darius to avenge the defeat at Marathon. Herodotus represents him as unenthusiastic but incited by Mardonius; he called a select conference (*σύλλογον ἐπίκλητον*) of the best Persians, at which he announced his intention. Mardonius encouraged him and Artabanus opposed him, and dreams tipped the balance in favour of going to war (7.1, 4, 8–19). As Briant says, ‘this entire discussion ... raises strong suspicions, since both the speeches given and the arguments exchanged totally derive from a judgment *post eventum*’.<sup>36</sup> Beyond that, we may wonder where Herodotus obtained this account of an episode involving Xerxes and leading Persians.

<sup>31</sup> Repeated in Just. *Epit.* 1.5.8–6.7, Polyaeus *Strat.* 7.6.7.

<sup>32</sup> Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella 2007: 163 on 1.125.2; Briant 2002: 27–8.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Briant 2002: 518–22, cf. 777–8; Xerxes in an inscription at Persepolis (XPf) announces himself as son of Darius but does not mention Atossa or his descent from Cyrus: e.g. Kuhrt 2007: 244 Xerxes 1.

<sup>34</sup> The moment of suspicion is at 5.106–7.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Briant 2002: in general 348–50, on Histiaeus 144, 153–5, on Hippias 146, 159–60, on Demaratus 369.

<sup>36</sup> See Briant 2002: 525–6.



This is not the kind of paper that culminates in a conclusion. It has been an exploration of how Herodotus deals with public decision-making by different bodies in different contexts.

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