

HERODOTUS' CATALOGUES OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE IN THE LIGHT OF THE MONUMENTS AND THE GREEK LITERARY TRADITION

O. KIMBALL ARMAYOR

University of Alabama

I

In 1912 How and Wells' standard commentary on Herodotus¹ called him "our best authority on the ethnography of the Ancient East."² In 1978 our chief authority on the ethnography and organization of the Achaemenid Persian Empire is still Herodotus.³ Perhaps he intended to be viewed as an authority on the Persian Empire. Herodotus' great Satrapy-list of Book 3 purports to tell Darius' own division of the Empire into 20 satrapies, plus the Persians themselves and three gift-bearing dependencies, and also Darius' own assignment of tribute (3.89 ff.). Herodotus' great Army-list of Book 7 purports to describe the united army of the Empire as reviewed in Doriscus by Xerxes himself on the eve of his invasion of Greece (7.59 ff.).

Therefore we are entitled to ask, just as scholars from the time of Thucydides onward have always asked, what kind of authority is Herodotus? If Herodotus was the Father of History, as Cicero said he was (*De Legibus* 1.1.5), what kind of father was he? We have not another connected account of the ancient east. Therefore we need to determine all the more whether Herodotus' great catalogues of the Orient constitute a true authority.

¹W.W. How, J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1912, corr. ed. 1928), hereafter known as HW, 2.151. Likewise Darius' Behistun Inscription in Old Persian is here known as DB, Darius' Persepolis Inscription E in Old Persian as DPe, and Darius' Susa Inscriptions E and F in Old Persian as DSe and DSf.

²This is the written version of a paper that I read to the American Philological Association, convened in Atlanta, on 30 December 1977. I have tried to change the original text as little as possible and to keep the footnotes to a minimum. Both paper and article are meant to introduce a forthcoming book on the subject.

³Virtually all the modern authorities still take Herodotus at his word to one extent or another. See also note 34 below.

For control we look to archaeology. Here there has been restiveness over the contrast between Herodotus and the monuments at least from the time of Sir Henry Rawlinson and his decipherment of the Behistun monument.⁴ On the other hand, perhaps R.W. Macan can still be taken to represent the consensus reaction to it: "if the monuments do not show it [i.e. what Herodotus says], so much the worse for them."⁵

Now the contrasts are not so easily disposed of. However incomplete and therefore unsatisfactory the record, there is a formidable array of Persian evidence on stone: the catalogue inscriptions of the Empire from Behistun, Naqsh-i Rostam, Suez, Susa, and Persepolis, for which we now have good working texts by Roland Kent and G. G. Cameron, among others;⁶ the great pictorial reliefs and Royal Tombs of Persepolis and Naqsh-i Rostam, admirably catalogued for the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute by Ernst Herzfeld, Erich Schmidt, Elizabeth Hauser, and their colleagues;⁷ and other monuments, such as those of Susa and Pasargadae.⁸ From these we can reconstruct the official record of the Persian Empire, written and approved by its own kings.⁹

II

Traditionally we have assumed that Herodotus too wrote some kind of official version of the Persian Empire.¹⁰ But I have concluded that even when we make all possible allowances for ambiguity, distortion, and royal propaganda, Herodotus' great catalogues are hopelessly irreconcilable with those of the Persians themselves on stone. Let me give three different kinds of example.

First, most of the 67 names on Herodotus' Satrapy-list, including whole provinces on end, do not appear on the monuments at all. All of the third, fourth, fifth, eleventh, eighteenth, and nineteenth provinces, some 22

⁴Cf., e.g., George Rawlinson, *Herodotus* (London 1860) 4.57, note on Persepolis.

⁵R.W. Macan, *Herodotus VII-IX* (London 1908), 1.1.83.

⁶Roland Kent, *JNES* 2 (1943) 302-306 and *Old Persian* (New Haven 1953²) 116-56; Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis* (Chicago 1953-70) 3.108-10; G. G. Cameron, "The Persian Satrapies and Related Matters," *JNES* 32 (1973) 47-56 with bibliography.

⁷Schmidt (above, note 6) vols. 1-3.

⁸Of secondary significance only in relation to Persepolis.

⁹For Darius' own composition and approval at Behistun, see DB 4.88 ff.

¹⁰E.g., HW 1.280, 406, 2.152; J.L. Myres, *Herodotus Father of History* (Oxford 1953) 159, 220; Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford 1954) 7.580-689 with bibliography; Ernst Herzfeld, *The Persian Empire* (Wiesbaden 1968) 288, 295 f.; M.A. Dandamayev, in *Beiträge zur Achämenidengeschichte*, ed. G. Walser (Wiesbaden 1972) 20.

nations—all these and many more are conspicuously absent from the registry of the monuments, as many as 42 nations in all.¹¹

Some of Herodotus' nations that do appear on the monuments are very different there. For example, Herodotus knows the Sagartians as Persian nomads rather than Median rebels (Hdt. 1.125, 7.85; DB 2.33 f., 4.52). The Outioi he knows as Pactyan rather than Persian (Hdt. 3.93, 7.68; DB 3.40). The Hyrcanians he knows as Persian rather than Parthian (Hdt. 3.117, 7.62; DB 2.35, 3.36 f.).

Many of Herodotus' nations that belong to the same province are registered separately on the monuments. For example, Herodotus' Ionians and Carians belong to the same first province, but the Ionians of the monuments are registered as three separate nations and the Carians are yet a fourth. Herodotus' Sattagydae and Gandarioi belong to the same seventh province, yet they are separate and distinct on the monuments. Herodotus' Babylon and Assyria belong to the same ninth province, but they are registered separately on all the monuments. Herodotus' Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, and Areioi all belong to the same sixteenth province, but on the monuments all four are separate and distinct.

And for all his 67 nations, Herodotus does not catalogue some of those that are registered on the monuments, such as Arachosia or Akaufaka, for example, or important lands on the Behistun monument, such as Margiana in Bactria, Kampanda and Raga in Media, Izala in Assyria, Gandutava in Arachosia, or Dubala in Babylonia. There are numerous examples and all of them specially important to Darius' re-establishment of the Empire.¹²

Much the same is true of Herodotus' great Army-list. Some 43 of his nations do not seem to appear at Persepolis or anywhere else on the monuments. As for Herodotus' elaborate brigading, it seems geographically impossible, difficult in the light of his own Satrapy-list, and incompatible with the parade of Empire at Persepolis or anywhere else on the Persian record. To name but one example, Herodotus brigades the Bactrians with the Amyrgian Scythians (7.64), but he also puts the Bactrians in the twelfth satrapy, and groups the Scythians with the Caspians in the fifteenth (3.92 f.), and the Bactrians do not stand next to any of three kinds of Scythians on any of the Persian reliefs or monumental registers.¹³

¹¹That is to say they are absent from all six extant royal catalogues of the Empire with independent value: Behistun, Suez (Egyptian hieroglyphs only), Persepolis, Susa, Naqsh-e Rostam, Xerxes' Daiva text (XPh).

¹²Darius himself tells us how important, both at Behistun and also on the restoration-of-order tablets at Susa (DB and DSe).

¹³*Saka, Saka haumavarga (hauma-drinking), Saka tigraxauda (pointed-hat).*

The second kind of difficulty I would take note of is that of the costumes and weaponry of Herodotus' Persian Army.

What Herodotus purports to describe is a real army of the Persian Empire on parade, with Indians on Indian wild asses and chariots, Arabians on Arabian camels, Assyrians with iron-studded wooden clubs, Ethiopians in leopard and lion skins, and Eastern Ethiopians in horse-skin foreheads and crane-skin shields.

But if what Herodotus paints is a ceremonial Persian Army of characteristic costumes and weapons, we should be able to confirm what he says at Persepolis. Here we find the official pictorial and epigraphic record of the whole Achaemenid empire in the time of Darius and Xerxes, all the nations and all the ceremonial and traditional national characteristics that Herodotus seems to be interested in—more formal, perhaps, in the Apadana tribute procession, less formal and even quasi-military among the King's Throne-bearers,¹⁴ but always relevant. The evidence is not always unambiguous. But here if anywhere we have archaeological control over much of what Herodotus says about the Persian Army.

And here we have much that is influenced and even executed by the Greeks themselves. We have known of Ionian stone-cutters and ornamentation at Susa ever since Scheil's re-discovery of Darius' Foundation Charter there in 1929,¹⁵ and Carl Nylander found unmistakable evidence of Ionian building techniques at Pasargadae within the last decade.¹⁶ But the Ionian influence on the Achaemenid artistry of the capital cities was probably taken for granted by Xenophon and Pliny the Elder in antiquity (*Mem.* 4.2.33, *NH* 34.19.68).¹⁷ And such influence seemed apparent to the moderns at least from the time of Ker Porter in 1820.¹⁸ If anything, we are entitled to expect similarities rather than contrast between Herodotus' Greek account of the Empire and that of the Achaemenid artists and artisans, at least some of whom were Greeks themselves.¹⁹

¹⁴Schmidt (above, note 6) 153.

¹⁵Kent (above, note 6) *OP*² 143 f., DSf 42 f., 48; Carl Nylander, *Ionians in Pasargadae* (Uppsala 1970) 14 f. and note 21.

¹⁶Nylander (above, note 15), esp. pp. 69-149.

¹⁷They tell us that the King kidnapped talented Greeks into a life of bondage at his own residence, and more specifically that a great artist named Telephanes of Phocaea devoted himself entirely to Darius' and Xerxes' own royal workshops.

¹⁸Nylander (above, note 15) 13, 15 with notes; see also Georges Perrot, Charles Chipiez, *History of Art in Persia* (London 1892) 23-34, 491-501 with notes, and more recently, John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas* (London 1964) 118-25. (I regret that the second ed. is not yet available to me.)

¹⁹Boardman (above, note 18) 118-25, *Greek Art* (rev. ed., New York 1973) 115 and 117.

But even in the most notable instances, Herodotus' Persian-army costumes and weaponry seem diametrically at variance with the reliefs of Persepolis. For example, Herodotus makes it amply clear in no less than four different passages that his Persians wore Median trousers (1.71, 3.87, 5.49, 7.61), and Xenophon seems to echo that notion (*Anabasis* 1.5.8; cf. *Cyr.* 8.1.40). Yet of all the Persians at Persepolis and elsewhere on the monuments, royalty, officers, gentleman, Throne-bearers, Spear-bearers, mourners, guards, and common soldiers, Schmidt apparently identifies not a single trousered figure as Persian.²⁰ What Herodotus does say about Persian dress is suspect in the light of the friezes.

But even more telling is what he does not say. We have at least two different Persian fashions represented on the reliefs, the flowing candys and the slit rectangle. But Herodotus does not know either of them. And Herodotus does not know that the Medes and Persians wore different costumes. He believes that the Medes were geared like the Persians and indeed that the Persian costume was Median (7.62). But the Medes of the monuments have a domed or three-knobbed hat and *not* a fluted tiara, a belted coat and long trousers and *not* a flowing gown, low shoes almost always *different* from the usual three-strapped model of the Persians, and a distinctive short sword rather than a dagger.²¹ Thus Schmidt and his colleagues conclude that the Persians adopted their flowing attire not from the Medes but the Elamites.²²

Herodotus also knows nothing of the Persian battle-axe. But at Persepolis it is specially prominent in connection with the King, probably as a symbol of royal authority. It would hardly be going beyond the evidence to say that on ceremonial occasions the battle-axe was carried close to the King's person. The Persian spears of the reliefs tend to be long and not short as Herodotus says. The Persian bows of Persepolis seem to be short and not long as Herodotus says.²³

How then can we expect Herodotus to know how the more exotic nations of the Empire equipped themselves? To judge from literally dozens of examples, he does not in fact. For example, Herodotus says the Assyrians wore brazen helmets, carried iron-studded wooden clubs and linen breast-plates, and equipped themselves like the Egyptians (7.63). But if Herodotus means the Babylonians (e.g., 1.178, 3.92), they wear *conoid*

²⁰Schmidt (above, note 6) 1.23, 28, 32, 39, 83-85, 87-89, 107, 111, 117, 121, 132-34, 163-67, 169, 192, 224-29, 240-43, 257, 280, 282; 2.7, 9-11, 14, 18-24, 27-29, 32, 35, 37, 42 (seals), 68 (statuettes); 3.146 and figure 39.

²¹Schmidt (above, note 6), e.g., 1.23, 83 f.; 2.97; 3.112 f., 146, 155-58.

²²Schmidt (above, note 6) 3.146.

²³Note the contrast between Hdt. 5.49.3, 7.61, 211 and the seven-foot spears of Persepolis, e.g., Schmidt 1.132b, 166 f., 225b, Pls. 83 f., and that between Hdt. 7.61 and Schmidt 2.100 f.

headdress at Persepolis, the Assyrians themselves wear the ribbed fillet, the twisted turban, and the plain band, and both of them are markedly different from the Egyptians. And there are no Assyrian wooden clubs or linen breast-plates at Persepolis.²⁴

There can be no substitute for a careful survey of these items.²⁵ But that, with few exceptions, is the kind of contrast that we are contending with, even when Schmidt and his colleagues read Herodotus into the monuments in their very identifications and then used their identifications to confirm Herodotus. Perhaps the most notable case is that of the Apadana tribute procession, where they assumed from the outset that the Persians could not have been present because Herodotus said they were non-tributary and did not constitute a province of the Empire (3.89 ff., 97).²⁶ But Darius himself repeatedly tells us, both at Behistun and Persepolis, that the Persians bore tribute like anyone else (DB 1.6 f., DPe 2). Delegation No. 2 in the Apadana is characterized by the Persian-type flowing candys and Persian dagger, whatever their fillets and half-boots mean.²⁷ And the Persians appear as part of the King's Empire on all the other reliefs, all the Royal Tombs, and all the relevant inscriptions—probably because very few of them were Achaemenids like Darius and his family of Kings. Their Empire was not Persian. It was Achaemenid, and so was their art and architecture and religion.

This brings us to a third contrast, and one that points to a more hopeful explanation of Herodotus' great catalogues than that of mere historical reality. The orientation of Herodotus' Satrapy-list purports to be that of Darius himself, and Herodotus' province-numbers are explicitly "His" (3.89, 90.1). But here we have the best kind of control on Herodotus, some five different independent registers of Darius' Empire, and one of Xerxes',²⁸ plus the Apadana tribute delegations of Persepolis and the Throne-bearers of all the Royal Tombs. All the monuments begin the Empire with the heart of it, the Persians themselves and their most important bulwarks, which is what we might expect, after all. Yet Herodotus begins the Empire with the Greeks, their neighbors, and the coasts familiar to them. He begins with Ionia and greater Ionia, names Lydia and its neighbors inland second, and goes on to recite the nations of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean seaboard before proceeding to the interior, and even then he names the exotic Sattagydae, Gandarioi,

²⁴Or anything that might pass for them.

²⁵I shall try to be comprehensive in my book (see note 2 above).

²⁶Schmidt 1.85 ff., 3.112, 146.

²⁷Schmidt, e.g., 3.146. Herodotus' evidence must not be allowed to determine their identity.

²⁸See notes 6 and 11 above.

Dadicae, and Aparytae before he ever gets to Susa, Babylon, and, finally Media in the *tenth* province.

In short, Herodotus' orientation here is not Persian but Greek. It does not in fact belong to Darius, but rather to Ionian geography. Herodotus does not seem to know the Empire of the Persian record at all.

Whatever his sources, therefore, they could not be official. They could not be Persian archives or high-ranking Persian officials, for example, as we have come to speculate ever since the beginning of modern scholarship on this subject.²⁹

We can only confirm that view in the matter of tribute. Here again Herodotus purports to tell us the tribute assessment of Darius himself when he divided the *archai* of his Empire (3.89), and How and Wells, for example, believed that Herodotus gave "an official statistical account of the Empire."³⁰ But Herodotus' financial account of the Empire's 20 satrapies seems to rest on the sum of his first 19 items, or 7600 Babylonian talents, to which he adds 360 Indian talents of gold dust, and converts the whole to the Euboean standard. But all the latter need not detain us. These 7600 talents are simply 19 times the 400 talents of the first province, which is Ionia (3.90.1). Herodotus' elaborate itemized list is probably arbitrary. Herodotus or his source merely distributed these 7600 talents among the various provinces and the Persian Empire had little or nothing to do with it. Herodotus may have had the original 400 talents on good authority. Artaphernes' assessment of 6.42 remained current in Herodotus' own day or so he says. But even that 400 must be viewed in the light of all the other 400's of the History, just as Herodotus' 360 Indian talents must be viewed in the light of all the other 360's of the History. In any event the rest of these numbers have no claim on history on the basis of evidence now in hand. They belong rather to Herodotus himself or the Ionian logographers, who built on the numbers of Homer and Hesiod and told a good story with them (e.g., Hecataeus, *FGH* 1 F 19). Herodotus' total of 7600 talents was pre-determined.

Many parts of Herodotus' great catalogues seem pre-determined. For example, there are 67 nations in Herodotus' account of Darius' Empire. There are 67 contingents in Xerxes' army, navy, and cavalry. And there are 67 commanders in the combined Greek and Trojan armies of the *Iliad*. What we have to contend with here is not coincidence but Catalogues, Greek Catalogues with themes and rules of their own which we have not yet begun to understand.

²⁹See, e.g., Rawlinson (above, note 4) 1.70.

³⁰HW 1.280, 406.

III

To account for Herodotus' great catalogues of the Persian Empire, therefore, we must not look to the monuments at all, but rather to Herodotus' own Greek traditions, Ionian geography, logography, and epic and lyric poetry. Here again there can be no substitute for a careful survey of the items.³¹ But Herodotus' exotic costumes and weaponry are not those of Persepolis but rather of Homer, Hesiod, and the lyric poets, where we find brazen helmets, iron-studded clubs, and linen breast-plates, and the animal-skins of Paris and Menelaus and Hector and Patroclus and Agamemnon and Dolon, not to mention Herodotus' names and numbers and imagery. For the intermediate link with Herodotus' own geography and satrapies and national armies we must look to Hecataeus, who not only catalogued all the nations ruled by Darius (Hdt. 5.36, *FGH* I T 5), but also told of royal fortresses and naval arsenals (*FGH* I F 265, 299), of exotic national costumes and weaponry (e.g., *FGH* I F 284, 328), and named some of those who equipped themselves with the gear of other nations (e.g., *FGH* I F 284, 287). Herodotus' Catalogues of the Persian Empire are demonstrably those of a tradition at least as old as Homer's Catalogue of Greeks and Trojans.

We are faced with an irreconcilable conflict of historical authority on the nature and origin of the Persian Empire. Herodotus' Cyrus is not that of Pasargadae. Herodotus' Darius is not that of Behistun and Persepolis. We must choose. And whatever their color and emphasis, the royal monuments are the official record of the Empire and entitled to all the authority of such. As for royal propaganda, Greek stories were at least as prone to it as the monuments. With a carrot and a stick the Achaemenids told the Greeks what they wanted them to believe.

Herodotus is not in fact "our best authority for the ethnography of the Ancient East."³² Our best authority for the ethnography of the ancient East, and the nature and origin of the Persian Empire, is whatever we can make of the local archaeology in the light of all the monuments and without reading Herodotus into them. At best, Herodotus can only reflect a Greek picture of the Empire to be viewed in the light of earlier catalogues from his own Greek tradition.

On the other hand, there can be no legitimate discussion of Herodotus' aims in the terms of modern morality. Accusation and vindication in terms of truth and falsehood, candor and deception, authorship, plagiarism, and integrity, have all been a mistake of categories. Herodotus sought to write a

³¹See note 25 above.

³²See note 1 above.

story of the Persian wars and their background to commemorate the great deeds of either side, as he tells us (1.1), and to keep his audience entertained long enough and well enough to do it. In modern terms, Herodotus sought to write a *story* of history rather than history itself. Among authors extant in connected form, Herodotus was certainly the Father of History. But we have tried to make him out the wrong kind of father.

What emerges here is not a lesser genius but rather a greater. If Herodotus drew on less of an eastern heritage than we ever suspected, he drew on a richer and greater western inheritance and then transformed it. So real did he paint his eastern nations that we came to assume that "if the monuments do not show it, so much the worse for them."³³ So real did he list his satrapies and contingents that we never thought to view them as Greek Catalogues. We still try to find Herodotus in the royal monuments and read his numbers into the royal exchequer, and when the kings of Persia disappoint us in their records, still in search of Herodotus we read them over again and call for a new assessment.³⁴ No Greek ever told a story better. Herodotus had a liveliness and verisimilitude that led Thucydides to demand the truth of himself and damn Herodotus for not telling it (1.21.1). So convincing was he that we have been led not only to demand the truth of Herodotus, but also to expect it.³⁵

³³See note 5 above.

³⁴For example G. G. Cameron (above, note 6) 47-56; see also note 2 above. Clearly I could not have done justice here to any of the various schools of thought on this clash of authorities, from the Rawlinsons to the present. Therefore I have not tried. In my forthcoming book I deal explicitly and at length with Blakesley, Sayce and How and Wells, Meyer, Bury and Gray, Lehmann-Haupt and Junge, Olmstead, Toynbee, Burn, and Cameron, among others.

³⁵I want to thank Prof. Ernst Badian of Harvard and Prof. Douglas Gerber of the University of Western Ontario for their very kind help with this work. They are not at all responsible for the use I have made of it, or for errors of judgement and execution that remain, nor are they necessarily committed to any of my conclusions.