

Ancient Ethnography

To Our Parents: Nili and Uri, Bernadette and Edward

Ancient Ethnography

New Approaches

Edited by Eran Almagor and Joseph Skinner

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Bloomsbury Academic

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

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First published 2013

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-84966-890-3
epub: 978-1-4725-3759-1
ePDF: 978-1-4725-3760-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ancient ethnography : new approaches / [edited by] Eran Almagor, Joseph Skinner.
pages cm

Summary: "By providing a platform for scholars working in a variety of fields, this volume presents cutting-edge research dealing with various aspects of ancient ethnographic thought: its formation and development, its intellectual and cultural milieux, the later reception of ethnographic traditions, and the extent to which these represent major constitutive elements of shifting notions of culture, power and identity"— Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-84966-890-3 (hardback)— ISBN 978-1-4725-3759-1 (epub)— ISBN 978-1-4725-3760-7 (epdf) 1. Ethnology—History—Sources. 2. Ethnology in literature. 3. Civilization, Ancient. 4. Civilization, Classical. I. Almagor, Eran. II. Skinner, Joseph.

GN308.A54 2013
305.8009—dc23
2013025911

Typeset by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NN
Printed and bound in Great Britain

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Preface

The origins of this volume can be traced back to the final leg of a lengthy journey from one conference to another, from Lampeter to Liverpool in June 2009. The idea to assemble a group of researchers employing new approaches to the study of ancient ethnography was subsequently realized in a panel at the 2010 Classical Association Conference in Cardiff. Its success and the interest it generated prompted us to expand the project by soliciting papers from scholars whose work we admired with a view to shedding new light upon a field of enquiry that was in danger of appearing moribund. The results are presented here. Many people made this wonderful and rewarding experience possible, and we would like to thank them all. Our warmest thanks are due to Deborah Blake, our original contact at Duckworth, who accompanied the volume from its inception to (almost) its final form only to be succeeded by the ever-helpful and incredibly patient Charlotte Loveridge at Bloomsbury Academic. Special thanks are also due to Thomas Harrison, our original panel chair, for invaluable help and advice throughout the duration of this project. We are grateful to the original participants of the panel, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and Katerina Oikonomopoulou, and to Anna Foka, for timely and vital assistance. We would also like to offer our warmest thanks to all those who agreed to submit chapters to the volume. Spread across four continents, their willingness to share their knowledge and ideas has made this an enlightening and wholly enjoyable experience. We are also grateful to our various friends and colleagues for their insightful comments. Eran would like to thank the British Academy (and the overseas fellowship scheme) for the opportunity to conduct research in the UK in the summer of 2009, thereby facilitating this collaboration. Heartfelt gratitude is also expressed to Christopher Pelling for sponsoring that research. We are deeply indebted to Emma Dench, both for her willingness to act as respondent to the volume and for the kind support and encouragement that she has provided throughout, and to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to reproduce the jacket illustration.

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The Stories of the Others: Storytelling and Intercultural Communication in the Herodotean Mediterranean

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The publication in 1980 of Francois Hartog’s *Le miroir d’Hérodote* and its translation in English in 1988 brought a widespread shift in the study of Herodotus, Greek ethnography and Greek identity.¹ According to Hartog, Herodotus’ work was primarily an exploration in the depiction of the Other. Greek identity and Greek cultural experience, or, as Hartog often seems to conflate, Athenian identity and Athenian cultural experience, provided the necessary code to understand the various barbarian peoples depicted in Herodotus’ work. Herodotus’ barbarians are not there because Herodotus is primarily interested in conveying information about these peoples; they are there because they provide a means of thinking about Greek identity, Greek culture and the great Greek achievement of defeating the Persian Empire. The depiction of these peoples is thus conditioned by their differences, in one way or another, from what is considered to be Greek identity and culture: the Herodotean barbarians are defined and presented in juxtaposition to what is seen as the Greek standard. This is the reason that one cannot attempt a mere comparison between the barbarian images of Herodotus and what we can learn about these barbarian peoples from archaeology, epigraphy and their native sources.² Herodotus’ images are exercises in the depiction of the Other, not objective analyses of non-Greek communities and cultures; they tell us more about Greek self-perception and self-definition than about the barbarians they purport to describe. Herodotus’ work is an exercise in alterity and polarity.³

A year after Hartog’s translation in English, a second important book was translated from its German original of 1971: this was Detlev Fehling’s work on Herodotus’ sources.⁴ According to Fehling, Herodotean source citations should not be seen as the result of research conducted by the historian; instead, they are fabrications that serve to enhance the verisimilitude of the stories reported by covering the tracks of Herodotus’ fabrication of these stories. Fehling’s argument that Herodotus has fabricated his sources stressed in particular a certain kind of story: these stories can be called ‘the stories of the others.’⁵ These Herodotean stories which depict non-Greeks,

or which are attributed by Herodotus to non-Greek sources, have an evident Greek colouring and are meaningful largely in a Greek context. Given the insuperable gap between Greeks and barbarians, one could not expect that a non-Greek would ever be able to provide Herodotus with such Hellenocentric accounts. Could an Egyptian ever present the story of Proteus and Helen (2.112-20), or the story of the foundation of Dodona (2.54-7)? It is thus impossible that any of these 'stories of the others' were actually narrated to Herodotus by any of his barbarian informants; therefore, Fehling argued that Herodotus had himself fabricated most of the stories he attributed to his non-Greek sources. Fehling was not interested in the subject of polarity and alterity; nevertheless, his vision of Greek identity was essentially similar to that of Hartog. What was implicit in Hartog's lack of interest in the historical veracity of Herodotus' barbarian accounts becomes explicit in Fehling's judgement of the incompatibility of Greek-barbarian identities and the kind of Hellenocentric stories presented by Herodotus' 'barbarian informants'.

Hartog and Fehling have both raised important issues and have understandably created debates which are still ongoing. However, I would like to argue that both their approaches are deeply flawed, because they put the cart in front of the horse. We cannot start understanding the discursive frameworks within which the Herodotean stories are situated, or evaluate the historical veracity of Herodotus' account, before we study the process through which the stories that found their place in the Herodotean text were generated and communicated. The reason has been presented in a recent book by Joseph Skinner.⁶ The Mediterranean world at the time of Herodotus was characterized by centuries of cultural contact and exchange. The networks that moved goods, people, ideas and technologies, together with the consequences of Mediterranean-wide colonization and the effects of living under and working for the great empires of the East (Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Lydia, Persia), had created a world in which intercultural encounters were a reality for hundreds of thousands of people.⁷ The problem is that historians of antiquity have devoted little time and effort in thinking about the forms and patterns of inter-cultural communication. In what ways and in what forms did people coming from different communities and cultures communicate with each other? How were stories and information transmitted between cultures? To what extent did the means and forms of inter-cultural communication transform stories in the process of transmission and in what ways? What were the uses of such stories once transmitted?

These are admittedly difficult questions. But I would like to suggest that it is in asking such questions regarding the patterns and forms of intercultural communication that we should approach the stories of Herodotus in the first place. Instead of blindly following a simplistic model of polarity, as suggested by some of our ancient sources, and of alleging fabrication when the evidence does not fit the simplistic model, we should try to explore the ways in which the stories in Herodotus presuppose and reflect this long-term process of intercultural communication in the ancient Mediterranean world. I am by no means suggesting that we should reduce Herodotus to a passive mouthpiece of these processes of intercultural communication. There is hardly any doubt that Herodotus has his own agendas and that the stories he reports have undertaken modifications, displacements and transformations in

the light of his patterns of composition and emplotting.⁸ But we shall never properly understand what Herodotus does with these stories unless we try to understand the process of creation, exchange and transmission of these stories until the point they surface in Herodotus' narrative.

What evidence do we have of such processes? Let me start by looking at three examples in an effort to illustrate the communicative context that we need to imagine in order to situate Herodotus' stories. Herodotus has many stories concerning the Greek and Carian mercenaries that became an important factor of the political and military history of Saite Egypt. These mercenaries and their descendants became the nucleus of the Greek and Carian communities that flourished in the Egyptian capital of Memphis for many centuries before and after Herodotus' time (2.151-4).⁹ The life of these Greek and Carian immigrants in Egypt is nicely illustrated by the 'bilingual' stelae of Memphis.¹⁰ These are stelae with two or more registers, which have been called bilingual, because they combine registers in typical Egyptian fashion (e.g. with scenes of the deceased in front of the enthroned Osiris) with registers with *ekphora* scenes which are typical of Greek art. The majority of these stelae carry inscriptions either in both hieroglyphic and Carian or only in Carian;¹¹ but a recent find has an inscription in the Greek language for a woman whose fragmentarily preserved name is probably not Greek.¹² These immigrants, the result of processes of mobility and power put in motion by the empires of the East, chose to be commemorated with stelae which combined Egyptian, Carian and Greek elements.

My second example comes from Athens. It is a fourth-century epitaph found in the mining area of Laureion.¹³

Atotas the miner

From the Black Sea Atotas, the great-hearted Paphlagonian,
put to rest his body from the toils far away from his fatherland.

Nobody vied [with me] in [my] art; I am from the stem of Pylaimenes,
who died subdued by the hand of Achilles.¹⁴

Whether Atotas was a slave or a freedman at the time of his death is impossible to tell; that he must have started as a slave miner is indisputable. We are dealing with a person who was proud of his manual skill and of his national origins. And what is most tantalizing, he was able to express his national credentials in a language that could appeal to the Greek reader of this epitaph. This Paphlagonian was clearly steeped in Greek culture. The epigram uses Homeric expressions; Atotas is described as *megathymos Pafllagon*, which brings into mind the verse of the *Iliad* in which Paphlagonians are described with exactly the same adjective (5.577). Interestingly, though, the Homeric version of the death of Pylaimenes is different from that of Atotas, since in the *Iliad* he is killed by Menelaus (5.576): being killed by Achilles is certainly more glorious, adding to the aggrandizement of Atotas' mythical ancestor. Clearly, Atotas could combine a good knowledge of Greek mythology with national pride and his personal or local Paphlagonian version of mythical events.¹⁵ Atotas, a natively alienated individual par excellence, created a new identity for himself in his new homeland. How was the Paphlagonian miner Atotas able to acquire the necessary knowledge to

portray himself in such characteristically Greek terms? What processes of intercultural communication do we have to assume?

My third source is a literary work: Xenophon's *Anabasis*. There is no doubt that it is not a transparent and objective reporting of what actually happened during the expedition of the Ten Thousand.¹⁶ While there is no actual agreement on what the best prism through which one can understand Xenophon's omissions, selections, rhetoric and presentation is, there is nevertheless a widespread consensus that the stories related in the text largely reflect what actually happened, even if they have been modified or retold from a particular perspective.

A first story comes from the aftermath of Cunaxa, when Cyrus has been killed, Tissaphernes has managed by treachery to arrest and execute the Greek generals, and the Greek army is debating what plan to follow in order to survive and return back home. Xenophon has already suggested that the only way forward was to fight their way out of Mesopotamia and back into the Greek world, instead of capitulating or collaborating with the Persian king. His proposal was refuted by a man named Apollonides, who spoke in the Boeotian dialect, and who proposed that negotiation with the king was the only option (3.1.26). Apollonides' speech was met with a furious refutation by Xenophon, who pointed out the treachery of the Persians and the futility of trusting them and concluded:

'In my opinion, gentlemen, we should not simply refuse to admit this fellow to companionship with us, but should deprive him of his captaincy, lay packs on his back, and treat him as that sort of a creature. For the fellow is a disgrace both to his native state and to the whole of Greece, since, being a Greek, he is still a man of this kind.' Then Agasias, a Stymphalian, broke in and said: 'For that matter, this fellow has nothing to do either with Boeotia or with any part of Greece at all, for I have noticed that he has both his ears bored, like a Lydian's.' In fact, it was so. He, therefore, was driven away. (3.1.30-2)¹⁷

This is a characteristic example of the widespread practice of ethnography from everyday people: notice the role in the encounter of the observations of Apollonides' dialect, his bored ears, and the ethnographic knowledge that this is a practice associated with the Lydians. This incident obviously can be seen as a verification of the alterity model and the xenophobic aspect of the Greek attitude towards the barbarians; the bored ears are evidence of a non-Greek custom, and therefore Apollonides is immediately designated as a barbarian and driven away, in conditions of immediate danger. But things are not so simple. If Apollonides was actually a Lydian, it is remarkable that he bore a Greek name and was able to pass along as a Boeotian. But in fact we cannot be certain that Apollonides was indeed Lydian; it has been proposed that he might have come from Aeolis in Asia Minor, where a dialect similar to Boeotian was spoken and where proximity with Lydia meant that certain Lydian customs could be adopted by the local Greeks; or he might indeed have been a Boeotian who had spent time in Aeolis during the Ionian war and adopted Lydian customs.¹⁸ Whichever of these three scenarios we opt for, it is obvious that the strict polarity between Greek and barbarian appears problematic in practice.

There is nevertheless no doubt that a discourse of alterity is applied in this

particular case in order to exclude the Other; but this example is a good illustration that this discourse is a strategy, and not the quintessential Greek view of the Other. Xenophon has just proposed a bold and extremely risky strategy of escaping from their cul-de-sac; in order to convince his fellow soldiers to accept a policy that looked totally against the odds, he has employed a pan-Hellenic and anti-barbarian discourse.¹⁹ This discourse was a strategy that was necessitated by the particular context and its needs; and the same discourse is employed as a strategy to marginalize and exclude those who were opposing the policy proposed. If indeed Apollonides was Aeolian or Boeotian, the irony is even greater, since the discourse of alterity was employed against a fellow Greek. Since Apollonides was able to address the assembly, it is clear that in other contexts Greeks did not object to an Aeolian or Boeotian wearing barbarian earrings, or saw no problem in accepting a Lydian who successfully passed as a Boeotian. The alterity discourse is only employed in a certain context and for pursuing a particular strategy.

That things could be very different in other contexts is shown by a very illuminating passage that deserves to be quoted in full. While at Cotyora on the Black Sea coast, the Greek army received ambassadors from Corylas, the king of the Paphlagonians, proposing a pact of non-aggression; the ambassadors were then invited to dinner by the Greeks. After eating followed entertainment from the various contingents of the Ten Thousand (6.1.5-13):²⁰

After they had made libations and sung the paean, two Thracians rose up first and began a dance in full armour to the music of a flute, leaping high and lightly and using their sabres; finally, one struck the other, as everybody thought, and the second man fell, in a rather skilful way. And the Paphlagonians set up a cry. Then the first man despoiled the other of his arms and marched out singing the Sitalcas, while other Thracians carried off the fallen dancer, as though he were dead; in fact, he had not been hurt at all ...

After this a Mysian came in, carrying a light shield in each hand, and at one moment in his dance he would go through a pantomime as though two men were arrayed against him, again he would use his shields as though against one antagonist, and again he would whirl and throw somersaults while holding the shields in his hands, so that the spectacle was a fine one. Lastly, he danced 'the Persian' dance, clashing his shields together and crouching down and then rising up again; and all this he did, keeping time to the music of the flute ...

After the Greek contingents of the Ten Thousand presented their own dances as well, the Paphlagonians were really impressed by the military format of the dances:

Thereupon the Mysian, seeing how astounded they were, persuaded one of the Arcadians who had a dancing girl to let him bring her in, after dressing her up in the finest way he could, and giving her a light shield. And she danced the Pyrrhic with grace. Then there was great applause, and the Paphlagonians asked whether women also fought by their side. And the Greeks replied that these women were precisely the ones who put the King to flight from his camp. Such was the end of that evening.²¹

This is another great illustration of ethnographic practice. What we see here is collaboration between the various Greek and non-Greek elements of the Ten Thousand in order to provide entertainment, impress the Paphlagonian ambassadors with the spectacle and their martial valour, and ensure good relations with the Paphlagonian king that would be essential for their survival. Ethnographic display is here put into the service of forging diplomatic relations. Notice also how the visual display of the dances is associated with the exchange of ethnographic information on the subjects and the stories related to the dances. Xenophon mentions that the Thracian dancer was singing a song about Sitalcas, a contemporary Thracian king; this song must have been another important source of ethnographic information. It is also important that the dancing performances betray a prior process of cultural mingling: it is not accidental that the Mysian dances a Persian dance after having served in what was originally a contingent of a Persian army. But let us also observe that there is not a trace of alterity, xenophobia or hostility in this passage. Xenophon's authorial voice clearly approves of the fine spectacle provided by the Thracians and the Mysian members of the Ten Thousand. But the most interesting thing of all is that it is the Mysian who realizes how the army can make political capital out of the entertainment and takes the initiative to convince an Arcadian to lend him his slave girl in order to dance a martial dance, a fact used by the army in order to impress upon the Paphlagonians that even the women in the army make valiant fighters. This event should not be seen as presenting a rosy picture of relationships between Greeks and barbarians; it only means that the attitudes of collaboration evident in this passage is as much part of the relationship between Greeks and Barbarians as the discourse of alterity that we saw in the previous example.

After finally managing to cross to Europe and because of the lack of alternatives due to Spartan hostility, the Ten Thousand decide to offer their services to the Thracian ruler Seuthes.²² Xenophon presents his offer on behalf of the army and Seuthes' reaction is very revealing:

Upon hearing these words Seuthes said that he should not distrust anyone who was an Athenian; for he knew, he said, that the Athenians were kinsmen of his, and he believed they were loyal friends. (7.2.31)²³

What Seuthes was probably referring to was the myth of Procne and Tereus. According to the myth, Tereus had married the Athenian princess Procne who begat their son, Itys; Tereus then raped Procne's sister, Philomela, and cut her tongue so that she would not be able to reveal the horrific truth to her sister. Nevertheless, she managed through embroidering a message on a robe to reveal the truth to Procne, who went on to kill Itys and serve him up to Tereus in order to punish him; all three of them were subsequently transformed into different birds. It is probable that in the earlier versions of the myth there was no Thracian connection to this story and Tereus was connected to Megara or to Daulis in Phocis; but in tandem with the wider process which saw the 'barbarization' of various characters in Greek myths, Tereus became identified as a Thracian king. The earliest attestation of this new version of the myth was Sophocles' lost *Tereus*;²⁴ the story was clearly taken seriously, for in a famous aside Thucydides protested against this identification.²⁵

Modern scholars have been particularly keen to stress how Greek self-definition and the 'invention of the barbarian' took place through the reinterpretation of Greek myths.²⁶ It is only recently that scholars have started to recognize that the process of turning mythical figures into barbarians could lead in the opposite direction as well; through reinterpretation and retelling, Greek myth could also be used to link together Greeks and barbarians based on the construction of fictive kinship.²⁷ Edith Hall, a prominent supporter of the alterity approach, has argued that even if that is the case in the case of Tereus, the identification was hardly designed to flatter the Thracian royal family, but rather stressed the outrageous violence that characterized Thracians in general.²⁸ Xenophon's story proves that attitudes like that of Hall are largely off the point. Seuthes does not seem to have any qualms in accepting the myth as evidence of his kinship with the Athenians; in fact, later on in his narrative of the Ten Thousand's service under Seuthes Xenophon reports that 'they gave out "Athena" as the watchword, on account of their kinship' (7.3.39). These incidents show that the use of Greek myths to forge links between Greeks and barbarians was not a process that was comprehensible by and appealing to Greeks only (though it is a Greek that relates the story in this case). Seuthes was happy to accept Greek myths and deities as a means of forging links. Even more, Xenophon illustrates one context in which many of these stories took shape through intercultural encounters: the court of a barbarian king in which many Greeks served in various capacities. Xenophon testifies that Seuthes himself had a sufficient understanding of the Greek language;²⁹ in fact, the knowledge of the Greek language in his court went significantly lower down the scale.³⁰

What does all this evidence suggest? From the bilingual stelae of Memphis, through the epitaph of a Paphlagonian slave, to the ethnography of bored ears and dances among mercenaries and the use of Greek myth by non-Greeks, the Mediterranean world of Herodotus was experiencing a very lively process of intercultural communication. The discourse of alterity is a very limiting and simplistic approach to understand this very complex world. And the examples from these various sources show that the stories of the Others found in Herodotus were not his own fabrication, but reflect Herodotus' reworking of a very widespread process of intercultural communication. Let us then proceed to examine in some detail the patterns of intercultural communication and their role in Herodotus' work along with a typology of the stories that were circulated within this process.

Patterns of intercultural communication

Cultural contact and encounters between two different groups do not lead to a single type of reaction. What we have to posit, in order to assess the process of creation of the various stories that found their way into the text of Herodotus, is a variety of patterns that the cultural encounters we examined above gave shape to. We can divide these patterns in two different ways: according to perspective and according to content. As regards perspective, stories can be told either from a Greek perspective (*interpretatio graeca*) or from a non-Greek perspective (local perspective).³¹ In other words, stories

can either try to translate the customs, values and history of one community in terms understandable by another (i.e. the Greeks in the case of Herodotus), or explain them in terms native to the community from which the stories originate. As regards content, the stories can either take as their subject issues that focus on the differences between Greeks and non-Greeks (polarity) or on common, shared or universal values and ideas (universality). Of course the division by content and the division by perspective are not mutually irreconcilable. A story, for example, can emphasize the differences between two cultures, while also trying to explain a custom of one culture in terms of the other.

The first pattern of communication is the polarity model we are so familiar with. This pattern focuses on differences between groups and creates stories which emphasize these differences. Given that *nomos* is king (Hdt. 3.38.4), every culture inclines to take its own customs as superior; accordingly, there is a strong tendency in such stories to portray other groups as inferior.³² The stories concerning Sperthias and Boulis, the Spartan messengers, are characteristic: they lecture the Persian satrap Hydarnes, who has only experienced subservience to the Persian king, on the value of Greek freedom, and they refuse to perform the Persian custom of obeisance to the king (*proskynesis*), as the Greek custom approved of obeisance only to the gods (7.135-6).

Polarity does not work only in one direction though; while some of the stories are used in order to denigrate other cultures and people and praise one's own values, it is equally possible to find stories in which the values and customs of others are used as a form of internal criticism.³³ This is the case in stories in which non-Greeks show the absurdity or problematic character of Greek customs and values. A nice example is Mardonius' speech in favour of Xerxes' plan to invade Greece.

Yet the Greeks are accustomed to wage wars, as I learn, and they do it most senselessly in their wrongheadedness and folly. When they have declared war against each other, they come down to the fairest and most level ground that they can find and fight there, so that the victors come off with great harm; of the vanquished I say not so much as a word, for they are utterly destroyed. Since they speak the same language, they should end their disputes by means of heralds or messengers, or by any way rather than fighting; if they must make war upon each other, they should each discover where they are in the strongest position and make the attempt there. (7.9)³⁴

An outsider's perspective is used in this story to criticize Greek practices of warfare as inane. We cannot verify whether Mardonius actually uttered this criticism, although that would not be implausible; what is important is that Greeks like Herodotus were willing to incorporate in their works stories which criticized their culture from an outsider's perspective (see also below the non-Greek *bon mots*).³⁵

In contrast to polarity, the second pattern of cultural communication creates stories that stress similarity; they are stories that can appeal to common or shared denominators, or present Greeks and non-Greeks as similar. It is particularly unfortunate that the discourse of alterity has effectively hidden from sight this pattern,³⁶ numerous examples of which appear in Herodotus' work. A typical example concerns

the Egyptian soldiers who in the time of pharaoh Psammetichus rebelled and escaped towards Ethiopia:

Psammetichus heard of it and pursued them; and when he overtook them, he asked them in a long speech not to desert their children and wives and the gods of their fathers. Then one of them, the story goes, pointed to his genitals and said that wherever that was, they would have wives and children. (2.30.4)³⁷

This is the kind of story that could easily be understood by both a Greek and an Egyptian: every male could understand the moral that as long as they had genitals, they could create a new family, as well as the implications of such an approach to family and mobility.³⁸

Perhaps one would think that stories which are mutually meaningful only appeal to the lowest common denominator,³⁹ but in fact such stories can relate to the most serious aspects of human existence. The story of Intaphernes' wife is justly famous: when Darius offered her the opportunity to save one of the members of her family who had been convicted to death, she opted to save the life of her brother, instead of her husband or son. To the astonished Darius who enquired about the rationale of her choice, she answered that while she could get a new husband and beget more children,⁴⁰ she could not get another brother since her parents had already died (3.119). This argument makes its presence in a notorious passage of Sophocles' *Antigone*, generating a long discussion about the authenticity of the passage.⁴¹ Comparative research has shown that this view is current in a number of cultures, so there is no reason to suppose this is an exclusively Greek view attributed to a non-Greek person.⁴² This is a story that makes sense to people of different cultural backgrounds. The story of Pharaoh Pheros is another good example, also attested in an Egyptian Demotic text.⁴³ Pheros was punished with blindness for an offensive act; an oracle predicted that he would regain his sight if he washed his eyes with the urine of a chaste woman. Predictably, there was only a single chaste woman in the whole kingdom, which the Pharaoh duly married, while exterminating all the unchaste ones (2.111). Female lack of chastity is of course an issue of male concern in very different societies.⁴⁴

Some other stories present non-Greeks expressing values and ideas which are seen as being of universal application; whether the values and ideas expressed could be comprehensible and accepted by non-Greeks, or would only be acceptable to Greeks is more debatable than the stories mentioned above.⁴⁵ I think that the most likely hypothesis is that these stories as presented in the Herodotean text are the result of a complex process of interaction. A nice example is a story concerning the Pharaoh Amasis, who was criticized by his friends for spending his day in drinking and idleness after he had finished dealing with state business. Amasis defended his habits by arguing that in the same way that constantly strung bows break, human beings need a combination of relaxation and work in order to avoid mental and physical breakdown (2.173). The motif of Amasis the merryman can be found in Egyptian literature: a Demotic tale about a sick skipper is presented as a story narrated to entertain Amasis during a hangover, after the Pharaoh had consumed a large quantity of heavy wine despite the warnings of his councillors.⁴⁶ The story found in Herodotus clearly has an Egyptian basis, reflected in other Egyptian stories about the Saite kings

who were fond of wine,⁴⁷ even if we cannot establish whether its moral would be understood by the Egyptians as well.⁴⁸

Let us now move to patterns according to perspective. A third pattern tries to explain a culture and its particular features not in terms of understanding this culture's particular views, but by creating stories that attempt to explain the other culture by means that are comprehensible in one's own cultural terms: this would mean the *interpretatio graeca* of Egyptian customs or the *interpretatio aegyptiaca* of Greek customs. On the opposite side, the fourth pattern is exemplified in stories which try to explain a particular culture and its customs, monuments and history by means of this culture's own terms. Perhaps the best way to show the difference between the third and the fourth patterns is the various stories concerning the origins of the Scythian nation that Herodotus reports. He explicitly states that one story is told by the Greeks of the Black Sea area while the other is related by the Scythians themselves (4.5.8).

The Greek story seems a characteristic example of *interpretatio graeca*. While Heracles was driving the oxen of Geryon, he came to the land of Scythia where he lost his mares and had to copulate in the area of Hylaea with a half-woman, half-snake monster in order to get them back.⁴⁹ This copulation produced three sons: Agathyrsus, Gelonus and Scythes. When Heracles was leaving, he gave to the monster a bow and a belt with a flask for its buckle and told her to give the land to whomever of the sons was able to draw the bow. Scythes, the youngest one, was the only one who managed to draw the bow and thus became the ruler of the land and the ancestor of the Royal Scythians; Agathyrsus and Gelonus had to leave the land of Scythia and became the ancestors of the neighbouring nations of the Agathyrsi and the Geloni (4.8-10). The origins of the Scythian nation are explained through the adventures of a famous Greek hero. In a typical fashion, Heracles' presence in Scythia forms part of a wider Greek tale: bringing to Eurystheus the oxen of Geryon, one of the famous Twelve Labours. Let us now see the Scythian story:

The Scythians say that their nation is the youngest in the world, and that it came into being in this way. A man whose name was Targitaus appeared in this country, which was then desolate. They say that his parents were Zeus and a daughter of the Borysthenes River ... Such was Targitaus' lineage; and he had three sons: Lipoxais, Arpoxais, and Colaxais, youngest of the three. In the time of their rule (the story goes) certain implements – namely, a plough, a yoke, a sword, and a flask, all of gold – fell down from the sky into Scythia. The eldest of them, seeing these, approached them meaning to take them; but the gold began to burn as he neared, and he stopped. Then the second approached, and the gold did as before. When these two had been driven back by the burning gold, the youngest brother approached and the burning stopped, and he took the gold to his own house. In view of this, the elder brothers agreed to give all the royal power to the youngest. (4.5)⁵⁰

The story continues by showing how the different Scythian groups are descended from the three sons of Targitaus and finishes off by linking the miraculous golden objects with some Scythian rituals and customs (4.7). Some scholars have attempted

to interpret the golden objects in the light of the three functions of Indo-European social ideology;⁵¹ whether one accepts this interpretation or not, it is obvious that this is a totally different kind of story from that propounded by the Black Sea Greeks.⁵² There are no figures of Greek mythology in the Scythian tale and there are no links to any Greek tales or Greek concerns; it contains only native Scythian characters and is related to purely Scythians customs.

The different stories about the Scythians present the distinction between the third and the fourth patterns of communication in ideal clarity. In practice, Herodotean stories can show enormous complexity. We can find stories of non-Greek content similar to the Scythian story of Scythian origins,⁵³ or cases of *interpretatio graeca* which seem to have little connection with non-Greek views and traditions.⁵⁴ But equally interesting are those stories that seem to partake of both patterns in a complex form of interaction. This is clearly an issue that will require future study, but I want to draw attention here to one aspect of this phenomenon. This is the construction of stories in order to account in narrative form for non-Greek traditions, customs or rituals:⁵⁵ in other words, the use of narrative as a *media res* between *interpretatio graeca* and pure local lore. In particular, Herodotus' book on Egypt is full of stories which attempt to account for rituals, monuments or objects in narrative terms. The two stories narrated about Pharaoh Mycerinus can be seen as attempts to explain Egyptian rituals by means of storytelling. One story narrates how after the death of Mycerinus' daughter, the king built a hollow cow of wood and after gilding it buried her in it; this gilded cow was kept in a chamber of the royal palace of Sais, where they would burn incense and light a lamp all night long. Herodotus provides a description of the statue and narrates how it is brought to light annually, when the Egyptians mourn for Isis, because the girl begged her father when she was dying that once a year she should see the sun (2.129-32). It is clear that this is an attempt to explain the rituals connected to Isis not by recourse to Egyptian religious beliefs, but through constructing an elaborate and fascinating story which is understandable in terms of Greek culture.⁵⁶ In the story of Mycerinus' oracle, it is predicted that he would rule only for another six years, although he had been a wise and virtuous ruler and in contrast to his predecessors, who had enjoyed long reigns despite being unjust; in response, Mycerinus used lamps in order to turn the nights into days and prove the oracle wrong by living 12 'years' instead of six (2.133). As Stephanie West has noticed, both the religious principle that gods do not care to reward just and virtuous behaviour and the fact that Mycerinus must have been quite old by the time he came to rule, and thus could not justly complain that his life was cut short, are difficult to explain on their own; but the story becomes meaningful if the purpose of the oracle is to explain Mycerinus' reaction to keep lamps alight.⁵⁷ But it has also been convincingly shown that the Herodotean story is related to an earlier Egyptian story about Mycerinus.⁵⁸ These examples should be sufficient to show the complexity in which Herodotean stories employ different patterns of intercultural communication.

Types of Greek stories

Let us move from the patterns exemplified by the stories to the stories' types. We can posit one major division. On the one hand are stories which relate to objects, practices and people; in effect, they are either connected to them, or are aetiological. On the other hand, we can find stories which are related to interactive contexts: such stories emerge out of these contexts, or take these contexts as their setting.

Some stories are clearly the result of efforts to explain or describe particular monuments and objects: some of these are non-Greek objects and monuments found in Greece, or Greek monuments and objects which relate to non-Greeks; others are objects and monuments found in non-Greek countries. Among Croesus' dedications at Delphi, Herodotus mentions 'a female figure five feet high, which the Delphians assert to be the statue of the woman who was Croesus' baker' (1.51.5). We are not told why the Delphians thought that the statue represented Croesus' baker; there was probably a story related to the statue and it is likely that it arose out of some peculiar feature of the statue.⁵⁹ According to Herodotus, the only marvellous monument of Lydia was the tomb of Alyattes, whose enormous mound of earth was constructed by the men of the marketplace, the craftsmen and the prostitutes (1.93.2). Again some story, which we are not told, must have explained why the building of the monument was attributed to craftsmen and prostitutes. Referring to the legendary Egyptian king Sesostris, Herodotus mentions two reliefs carved on the living rock from different parts of Ionia, which depicted a warrior with spear and bow accompanied by an inscription in a script that was taken for Egyptian hieroglyphs (1.106). Herodotus was probably the first to associate these carved reliefs, which in reality were Hittite monuments with inscriptions in what is conventionally called Hittite Hieroglyphic, with the figure of Sesostris; to other Greeks it seemed more natural to associate these monuments with a script that looked like Egyptian hieroglyphic with a figure known from Greek myth. This figure was Memnon, the legendary king of the Ethiopians, who had participated in the Trojan War. It is not difficult to imagine how these monuments could be related to Memnon's trip to fight together with his Trojan allies.

In Scythia, Herodotus reports that 'there is one most marvellous thing for me to mention: they show a footprint of Heracles by the Tyras river stamped on rock, like the mark of a man's foot, but forty inches in length' (4.82). The statue of Pharaoh Sethos holding a mouse (2.141) is the generator of a story of how the Pharaoh defeated the Assyrians through an attack of mice, who ate through the quivers, bows and shield handles of the Assyrian army.⁶⁰ The story about how Sesostris escaped from a burning house by treading on two of his sons (2.107) can be plausibly seen as an explanation of the Egyptian convention of depicting the victorious pharaoh with his feet on the heads of his prostrate foes, who are depicted on a smaller scale.⁶¹ The smallest of the three great pyramids was explained through the story of how Cheops prostituted his own daughter, who built the pyramid out of the stones left by her lovers as a present (2.126). We could go further and say that certain famous monuments and objects tend to attract stories which become attached to them, or to the persons who are connected with these objects and monuments.

Other stories are the result of efforts to explain customs, rituals or ideas. The custom of women in certain Ionian cities not to eat together with their husbands or call them by their name is explained through a story of how the original Greek colonists killed the Carian inhabitants and married their daughters and wives, who consequently passed down the custom of abstention in order to protest and commemorate the massacre of their relatives (1.146). The Spartan custom of calling a cup of strong and undiluted wine 'Scythian cup' is attributed to a visit of the Scythians after the failed campaign of Darius to enlist the Spartans in a joint campaign against the Persians. As a result of this visit, the Spartan king Cleomenes learnt the drinking habits of the Scythians and became mad due to heavy drinking (6.84). The Scythian custom of carrying flasks attached to their belts is explained by the objects that Heracles gave to the monster mother of the Scythian nation to be given to the son who would rule Scythia (4.10).

Finally, stories are attached to specific individuals or occasions. Sometimes the individual or the occasion functions as a peg on which to append the story and the emphasis is on the story or motif, not necessarily on the individual, because many of these individuals might otherwise be insignificant from other points of view. Narrating the retreat of the Persian army after the catastrophic Scythian campaign, Herodotus relates the following story:

This Megabazus is forever remembered by the people of the Hellespont for replying, when he was told at Byzantium that the people of Calchedon had founded their town seventeen years before the Byzantines had founded theirs, that the Calchedonians must at that time have been blind, for had they not been, they would never have chosen the worse site for their city when they might have had the better. (4.144)

The reason the story seems to be remembered is because of the *bon mot*, which the Byzantines would be happy to use against Calchedonians, not because of the importance or notoriety of Megabazus himself.

But there are individuals who are widely seen as important and therefore stories related to them tend to be widely disseminated as well as widely attested stories or motifs tend to be attached to them. Whether these individuals are historical figures or not is not necessarily important from our point of view. There are stories which locate figures in the world of the fairy tale, like the Phrygian ruler Midas and the Lydian king Gyges.⁶² Possibly historical figures can be transformed into legendary figures whose exploits do not bear much relationship to the historical figures: Sesostris or Semiramis are two famous examples of this process. On the other hand, historical or possibly historical figures can be transformed into *personae* or types which are used in order to exemplify particular kinds of lessons, or to narrate particular kinds of stories: the historical figure of Anacharsis the Scythian ruler is transformed into the *persona* of the wise primitive barbarian who acts as an external critic of the values and practices of a particular society.⁶³

Contextual stories

Let us now move to stories which emerge out of interactive contexts or take such contexts as their settings. Herodotus presents explicitly a number of encounters and contexts in which such stories are told. He describes how the Scythian king Scyles came to a bad end for his participation in Bacchic rituals:

Now the Scythians reproach the Greeks for this Bacchic revelling, saying that it is not reasonable to set up a god who leads men to madness. So when Scyles had been initiated into the Bacchic rite, some one of the Borysthenites scoffed at the Scythians: 'You laugh at us, Scythians, because we play the Bacchant and the god possesses us; but now this deity has possessed your own king, so that he plays the Bacchant and is maddened by the god. If you will not believe me, follow me now and I will show him to you.' (4.79)⁶⁴

The Scythians duly observe Scyles and kill him, but the interesting detail, from our point of view, is the setting. This is a setting of encounters between Greeks and non-Greeks in which taunts and assertions of superiority play an important role.⁶⁵ The Scythians taunt the Greeks in such encounters over their Bacchic revelries and on this occasion a Borysthenite has found an opportunity to hit back by telling them about the actions of their own king. There are innumerable stories in Herodotus which can be seen as answers to questions and debates that took place in such encounters. These encounters provide the ideal context for many of the *bon mots* preserved in Herodotus' text; they are equivalents to the Borysthenite's attempt to score points against his Scythian interlocutors. Herodotus narrates how the Egyptians,

learning that all the Greek land is watered by rain, but not by river water like theirs, said that one day the Greeks would be let down by what they counted on, and miserably starve: meaning that, if heaven sends no rain for the Greeks and afflicts them with drought, the Greeks will be overtaken by famine, for there is no other source of water for them except Zeus alone. (2.13)⁶⁶

He also reports that '[the Persian] courses are few, the dainties that follow many, and not all served together. This is why the Persians say of Greeks that they rise from table still hungry, because not much dessert is set before them: were this too given to Greeks (the Persians say) they would never stop eating' (1.133).

Other stories are located in a context involving the exchange of information. Herodotus presents a visit of some Cyrenaeans to the Libyan oracle of Ammon, which also attracted a Greek clientele; during that visit, the Cyrenaeans come to converse with the local king Etearchus (who interestingly bears a Greek name) and in the course of discussion the geographic issue of the sources of the Nile is raised, as a result of which the local king comes to narrate a story he has heard in a different encounter in his court with members of a Libyan tribe (2.32). Places of international pilgrimage and conceivably other places of international encounters are places where stories were exchanged.

A different occasion of creating and narrating stories is in the context of diplomatic relationships between Greeks and non-Greeks. These relationships tend to focus on

the presence of Greek envoys and other visitors to the courts of non-Greek kings and potentates. Herodotus provides two interesting stories about relationships between Greek communities and the Egyptian pharaohs.

Moreover, Amasis dedicated offerings in Greece. He gave to Cyrene a gilt image of Athena and a painted picture of himself; to Athena of Lindos, two stone images and a marvellous linen breast-plate; and to Hera in Samos, two wooden statues of himself that were still standing in my time behind the doors in the great shrine. The offerings in Samos were dedicated because of the friendship between Amasis and Polycrates, son of Aeaces; what he gave to Lindos was not out of friendship for anyone, but because the temple of Athena in Lindos is said to have been founded by the daughters of Danaus, when they landed there in their flight from the sons of Egyptus. Such were Amasis' offerings. (2.182)⁶⁷

Herodotus states that the gifts of Amasis to the temple of Lindos were due to the fact that the temple was founded by the daughters of Danaus in their flight from Egypt.⁶⁸ How are we to interpret this statement? We should, I suggest, imagine an embassy from Lindos requesting gifts and donations, and justifying these requests on the basis of a Greek myth which established a cultic relationship between the sanctuary and Egypt; or perhaps we could assume that these gifts were the result of suggestions of some Greeks who served under the Pharaoh and used such a mythic narrative in order to justify the present. Whatever the case, what is important is how Greek myth is used in order to construct a relationship between Greeks and non-Greeks and to elicit benefits out of this relationship. The encounter between Seuthes and Xenophon that we examined above is an excellent illustration of this phenomenon, while also suggesting that the use of Greek myth as a means of intercultural communication is not Herodotus' fabrication.

It is in such a context that we should interpret another Herodotean story concerning the visit of a Greek embassy to Egypt. According to the story, an embassy from Elis visited the court of Pharaoh Psammis and, boasting about their organisation of the Olympic Games, enquired whether the Egyptians could think of a more just way of organizing the games. When the Egyptians found out that the Eleans allowed their own citizens to participate at the games, they criticized them for this:

For there is no way that you will not favour your own townsfolk in the contest and wrong the stranger; if you wish in fact to make just rules and have come to Egypt for that reason, you should admit only strangers to the contest, and not Eleans. (2.160)⁶⁹

Herodotus presents the story as if the occasion of the Elean visit is to boast about the fair organization of the Olympic Games; it is perhaps easier to assume that we have here another case of a Greek embassy soliciting gifts and privileges. One can easily imagine, if one wishes to maintain the historicity of the story, that in the context of such a visit, the Egyptians enquired about the Olympic Games and in the course of discussion the Egyptians raised the issue of the unfair participation of the Eleans themselves in the games. It is of course possible that there is no historical kernel in this story and that the story is 'simply' a Greek construction which presents a

Greek discourse on justice and the organization of the Olympic Games. Even if this were the case, the first important thing to notice is how a Herodotean discourse on a Greek topic is presented in a non-Greek context and in a very favourable light for the non-Greek side; this fact clearly shows how limiting is the usual way in which the discourse of alterity is presented as a mere polarity. The second important thing to notice is that the historical context in which such an exchange is presented as taking place is entirely plausible and has its real historical counterparts. In other words, the visits of Greeks to non-Greek courts in a variety of capacities are clearly occasions on which stories were exchanged and created to foment links and relationships.

Stories of the feats of Greeks in non-Greek courts, and of the deeds they accomplished while serving non-Greek monarchs, circulated widely in antiquity. Herodotus reports a famous story of Thales' engineering services to Croesus, although he does not believe it personally (1.75). There were many such individuals who returned to their places of origin after serving a foreign king and they must have been among the most important sources for the transmission and generation of stories. A few years ago a sixth-century Egyptian basalt statue was found at Priene in Asia Minor; it was dedicated by Pedon, who proudly recorded that he had served under Pharaoh Psammetichus II and was rewarded by the Pharaoh for his excellence with a golden bracelet and a city.⁷⁰ Pedon must have related many stories when asked about his exploits and adventures in Egypt and it is stories like these which ultimately found their way into Herodotus' narrative.

Other stories put the emphasis less on services rendered to the kings and more on the individual Greek, the setting of the barbarian court, or the character of the barbarian monarch, like that of Alcmeon's visit to the court of Croesus (6.125). This is a story which uses very efficiently the image of the fabulous wealth of Oriental kings in order to draw a vivid image of the setting of an Oriental court. Similar stories move on to depict in more detail an aspect of Oriental courts that proved irresistibly appealing to Greek imagination: the Oriental harem, both deeply fascinating and deeply abhorrent.⁷¹ The story of how Democedes of Croton, another Greek in the service of an Oriental monarch, was rewarded by Darius for healing his injury takes the opportunity to depict the harem:

After this, Darius rewarded him with a gift of two pairs of golden fetters. 'Is it your purpose,' Democedes asked, 'to double my pains for making you well?' Pleased by the retort, Darius sent him to his own wives. The eunuchs who conducted him told the women that this was the man who had given the king his life back. Each of them took a bowl and dipped it in a chest full of gold, so richly rewarding Democedes that the servant accompanying him, whose name was Sciton, collected a very great sum of gold by picking up the staters that fell from the bowls. (3.130)⁷²

This was a topic that generated innumerable stories, and became one of the central themes of the *Persian History* of Ctesias, another Greek doctor who, according to his own account, had served at the Persian court and was thus in an excellent position to provide a Greek audience with such titillating stories.⁷³

The story of Democedes shows that such visits and services could provide the setting for many stories which need not be historically true, but which can take a

variety of different forms and express a variety of different attitudes. The stories of the visits of Greek wise men to the courts of non-Greek kings adopt precisely such a historicizing setting. These stories can express the superiority of Greek values like moderation or free speech in the face of Oriental luxury and tyranny, as dramatized in the encounter between Solon and Croesus (1.29-33). They can be used to portray a clever and successful ploy or proposal by a Greek wise man; the story of how Bias or Pittacus went to Sardis and convinced Croesus not to attack the islanders is a good example (1.27). They can be used to illustrate Greek wise men in search of foreign wisdom; the stories of Greek wise men visiting Amasis are the exact opposite to those featuring Croesus.⁷⁴ They can be used in order to portray external, non-Greek criticism of Greek cultural practices and values, as in the case of the Elean example we examined.

Conclusions

We can, I believe, now move to some generalizations and conclusions. The examples from the *Anabasis* and the other non-textual sources cited should be sufficient to show the complex process of intercultural communication that was taking place in the Mediterranean world, before and after the time of Herodotus. They also provide convincing parallels for the kind of stories presented in Herodotus' text. I have tried to sketch a general typology of the intercultural stories that can be found in Herodotus' text and the patterns of intercultural communication that mediated them. We are a long way from having a full-scale analysis of Herodotus from the perspective of intercultural communication; but I would like to finish by emphasizing four important aspects of this complex phenomenon.

1. The first is the necessity of recognizing different forms of compatibility and comprehension that take place in intercultural communication. The Memphite stelae for Greek and Carian immigrants illustrate one possibility; the artists that made them were cognisant of both the Egyptian and the Greek/Carian style of a funerary stele, but they merely juxtaposed the one next to the other. There must have been many people involved in these networks and processes who were able to think in both cultural modes and address Egyptians in Egyptian and Greeks in Greek. Some of the most peculiar stories in Herodotus must have been the result of mediators who were able to address a Greek in a Greek mode of thinking. But it is also possible that instead of juxtaposing two modes, one can make them compatible. One of the most nefarious results of the alterity approach initiated by Hartog is its negation of agency to non-Greeks; the Greek stories about non-Greeks merely reflect what the Greeks wanted to say about themselves. But it is also possible that what the Greeks found interesting in those stories was compatible with the way non-Greeks wanted to present themselves. The famous story of Hecataeus and the Theban priests, who ridiculed his claim to be descended from gods in the sixteenth generation by showing him 345 statues of successive former priests (2.143), is a characteristic example superbly analysed by Ian Moyer.⁷⁵ The ossified culture of Egypt, in which 345 generations of priests had succeeded father to son, could be seen as a typical example of how Greeks

like Hecataeus and Herodotus perceived Egyptian alterity and contrasted it with Greek culture; a similar approach can be found in Plato's comments on Egyptian art.⁷⁶ But as Moyer has shown, this image of Egypt was one consciously created and maintained by contemporary Egyptians. An Egyptian discourse could therefore be compatible with a Greek one, and many Herodotean stories exemplify such a pattern.⁷⁷

2. My second point is that not all materials and means of intercultural communication had the same potency and circulation. We have seen many examples of the use of Greek myth as a means of intercultural communication: Seuthes and his Athenian mythic ancestors or Amasis and the Lindians. It is not always recognized how peculiar Greek mythology was in the ancient Mediterranean and how easily it led itself to be used as such a means. Greek mythology, and in particular its peculiar heroic component, is unique in being located in space and time; the movements of Greek heroes in space and time link communities and individuals, found settlements, instigate feuds.⁷⁸ There is nothing equivalent in the Mesopotamian or Egyptian mythologies, which are the only ones where we have sufficient evidence to judge. This power of Greek myth in creating a Mediterranean-wide mental landscape and in mediating intercultural communication is a major reason why it was adopted and adapted by non-Greek communities from Etruria to Lycia already during the archaic period.⁷⁹

But there is another aspect of Greek myth which is equally important. This is its ability to incorporate local traditions through selective filtering as well as the opportunity it offers to non-Greek cultures to present their traditions to a wider, Mediterranean-wide audience. Herodotus alludes at various places to the myth of Io and her sojourn to Egypt (1.1-5, 2.41). Greek myth tells the story of how Zeus fell in love with Io, how Io attracted the wrath of Hera and how Zeus had to transform Io into a cow to escape Hera's wrath. But Hera sent a gadfly to sting and persecute Io, who then roamed all over the world till she reached Egypt, where she gave birth to Epaphus.⁸⁰ This is no doubt a Greek myth, which seemed to have more than one version;⁸¹ but it is also clear that a Greek myth of a woman turned into a cow is linked here to the Egyptian tradition of Isis depicted as a cow and to Apis, an important deity of Memphis, where Greek presence was strong, depicted as a calf and with a name sounding similar to that of Greek Epaphus. The Greek mythic tradition has brought Io to Egypt and then identified her through translation with Egyptian traditions about Isis and Apis. It seems that when the world of mobility and empire brought Greeks to Egypt as mercenaries, traders and pilgrims, they identified one of their own mythical figures with a local one and located Io's sojourn in Egypt. Greek myth, because of its location in space and time, was in a position to link with a local myth and incorporate it as part of a Greek mythical narrative. Because Greek myth was located in space, it lent itself easily to adoption and adaption by non-Greek people, who already existed in it and often in very admirable roles; it is no surprise that Lycians were willing to adopt a famous Greek hero like Bellerophon, whose sojourns and travails Greek myth had located in Lycia. There are innumerable such cases in Herodotus;⁸² but the wider desideratum is a large-scale study of the use of Greek myth in intercultural communication in the ancient Mediterranean.

3. If Greek myth had a privileged position in Mediterranean intercultural

communication, the same applies to the imperial powers which shaped the Eastern Mediterranean world in the Archaic and Classical periods. From Assyria, Egypt and Lydia to Achaemenid Persia, the imperial rulers and their courts exercised an enormous role not only in the lives of their subjects and enemies, but also in their imaginations and conversations. In the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, countless stories circulated about these kings and their courts. Of significance is the emergence of complex literary narratives which used these rulers and their courts as settings for the most various projects.⁸³ Unfortunately, with two major exceptions, the vast majority of these texts have been lost. The two major exceptions are Greek literary texts and those Jewish texts that survived because they became part of the Bible.⁸⁴ Otherwise, we have only fragmentary glimpses of this extensive literature, like the famous text of Ahiqar, preserved in an Aramaic papyrus found in Elephantine in Egypt.⁸⁵

It would be instructive to compare a Herodotean story with the texts of the Bible. The story of how Darius enquired about the diversity of human customs by asking the Indians present in his court to bury their dead fathers and the Greeks to eat theirs is justly famous (3.38).⁸⁶ I Esdras has a parallel story in which three bodyguards attempt to convince Darius on what is the strongest thing, with the Jewish bodyguard Zerubbabel winning in convincing Darius that the strongest thing is truth (3-4). The authorial aims of these two stories could not be more different: Herodotus is using it in order to argue the relativity of human customs, while the author of I Esdras aims to glorify his religion and uses the story as a means through which Darius is convinced to allow the erection of the Temple.⁸⁷ But in both cases there is a common theme of the Persian court as an arena of enquiry. The story of Ahiqar is built around the theme of the wise courtier who is unfairly condemned, but who secretly escapes execution only to be vindicated afterwards; Stephanie West has rightly recognized the same theme in the story of Cambyses and his decision to execute Croesus (3.36).⁸⁸ But while in Ahiqar the travails of the hero largely provide a setting for the didactic part of the text, in Herodotus the same motif has been used in order to portray the mad tyrant that Cambyses 'was'. We need to recognize the international character of these motifs and settings and the complex role they played in articulating the most different stories. Alterity and polarity are very limiting interpretative tools here; the same applies to the Hellenocentric myopia which has examined such Herodotean stories outside their wider context of intercultural communication.⁸⁹ Imperial rulers and their courts functioned as a means of intercultural communication in the most variable ways.

4. My final point is to stress that these two factors (the popularity of Greek myth and the imaginary potency of imperial rulers) were by no means unrelated. Many years ago, David Lewis observed that the presence of Greeks under the service of the Persian king and his satraps played a significant role in the formulation of Greco-Persian diplomatic relationships:

It is to people of this kind that we have to look when we are considering the availability to the Persians of knowledge of Greek institutions and psychology, and they should certainly be thought of when we come to the detailed working out of diplomatic documents.⁹⁰

These Greeks did not merely conduct negotiations or formulate diplomatic documents. There are good reasons to believe that they were instrumental in creating stories that allowed the Persians to comprehend the nature and views of their Greek subjects, opponents and allies and to intervene in Greek affairs for their own benefit. We have already seen how Greeks could use mythology and genealogy in order to connect to non-Greeks and accrue benefits out of such links; but the process could work the other way round, as some stories in Herodotus manifest. Thus, Herodotus reports one of the stories that circulated in order to explain why the Argives did not participate in the pan-Hellenic campaign against the Persians: Xerxes sent a herald to the Argives, who claimed that since the Persians originated from Perses, who was the son of the Argive Perseus, the kinship between the two people should prevent them from fighting each other; the argument apparently convinced the Argives (7.150). Mythological stories that linked together Greeks and barbarians could originate from a non-Greek initiative, although it is rather likely that this non-Greek initiative was formulated and expressed through Greek brokers.⁹¹ The complexity of intercultural communication in antiquity and its importance for understanding Greek ethnography and Herodotus are truly fascinating issues; it is only to be hoped that future research will devote more attention to this area.

Notes

- 1 Hartog (1988); for the French intellectual background, see Leonard (2005). I would like to thank Elton Barker, Erich Gruen, Johannes Haubold, Kyriaki Konstantinidou, Ian Moyer, Isabelle Torrance and the editors for their invaluable comments and bibliographic suggestions. They are obviously not responsible for the views expressed here.
- 2 Hartog (1988: 3–11).
- 3 Cf. Pelling (1997).
- 4 Fehling (1989).
- 5 Fehling (1989: 49–77).
- 6 Skinner (2012). As Skinner shows, Greek ethnography as a textual genre is predicated on the widespread practice of ethnography, defined as 'thinking about culture from the point of view of the outsider', from thousands of Greeks and non-Greeks during the archaic and classical periods.
- 7 Vlassopoulos (2013).
- 8 See, e.g. Boedeker (2000).
- 9 Vittmann (2003: 155–79, 194–235).
- 10 Masson (1978).
- 11 Kammerzell (1993).
- 12 Gallo and Masson (1993).
- 13 See Bähler (1997: 94–7); Lauffer (1955–6: 200–4); Mitchell (2010: 95–7).
- 14 IG II² 10051: Ατῶτας μεταλλεύς. || Πόντου ἀπ' Εὐεξίνου Παφλαγῶν μεγάλθυμος Ατῶτας || ἥς γαίᾳς τηλοῦ σῶμ' ἀνέπαυσε πόνων || τέχνηι δ' οὐτις ἔριξε· Πυλαιμένεος δ' ἀπὸ ῥίζης || εἴμι', ὃς Ἀχιλλῆος χειρὶ δαμείεῃ ἔθανεν.

- 15 I assume that the epitaph was composed by Atotas himself, or at least with his collaboration; see also the commentary of Raffiner (1977: 14–16, 87–8).
- 16 See the articles in Lane Fox (2004a).
- 17 See also Harman's contribution to this volume, who deals with the same passage.
- 18 Lane Fox (2004b: 204); Ma (2004: 336–7).
- 19 Rood (2004). The charges brought against Xenophon for treason might be relevant to why he presents himself adopting pan-Hellenic discourse here.
- 20 See again Harman's contribution to this volume.
- 21 ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁρῶν ὁ Μυσοῦς ἐκπεπληγμένους αὐτοὺς, πείσας τῶν Ἀρκάδων τινὰ πεπαμένον ὀρχηστρίδα εἰσάγει σκευάσας ὡς ἐδύνατο κάλλιστα καὶ ἀσπίδα δούς κούφην αὐτῇ. ἡ δὲ ὠρχήσατο πυρρίχην ἐλαφρῶς. ἐνταῦθα κρότος ἦν πολὺς, καὶ οἱ Παφλαγόνες ἤρουντο εἰ καὶ γυναικες συνεμάχοντο αὐτοῖς. οἱ δ' ἔλεγον ὅτι αὐταὶ καὶ αἱ τρεψάμεναι εἶεν βασιλέα ἐκ τοῦ στρατοπέδου. τῇ μὲν νυκτὶ ταύτῃ τοῦτο τότελος ἐγένετο.
- 22 Stronk (1995).
- 23 Ἀκούσας ταῦτα ὁ Σεύθης εἶπεν ὅτι οὐδενὶ ἂν ἀπιστήσειεν Ἀθηναίων... καὶ γὰρ ὅτι συγγενεῖς εἶεν εἰδέναι καὶ φίλους εὖνους ἔφη νομίζειν.
- 24 Fitzpatrick (2001).
- 25 2.29.3; it seems that a significant factor in the transformation of Tereus into a Thracian was the phonetic similarity of his name with that of Teres, who was the founder of the Odrysian kingdom of Thrace around the middle of the fifth century.
- 26 For example, Hall (1989); see also Hall (2006).
- 27 Erskine (2005); Gehrke (2005); Gruen (2011).
- 28 Hall (1989: 104–5).
- 29 *Anabasis*, 7.6.8–9.
- 30 *Anabasis*, 7.3.22–25.
- 31 This is not to deny complex triangulations when more than two traditions are involved; some examples of such complexity are examined below.
- 32 Herodotus, though, protests against this tendency precisely because *nomos* is king: given the universal disagreement, it is best just to respect other people's customs.
- 33 Munson (2001: 144–6).
- 34 Καίτοι ἐώθασι Ἕλληνας, ὡς πυνθάνομαι, ἀβουλότατα πολέμους ἴστασθαι ὑπὸ τε ἀγνωμοσύνης καὶ σκαιότητος· ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἄλλήλοισι πόλεμον προεῖπωσι, ἐξευρόντες τὸ κάλλιστον χωρίον καὶ λειότατον, ἐς τοῦτο κατιόντες μάχονται, ὥστε σὺν κακῷ μεγάλῳ οἱ νικῶντες ἀπαλλάσσονται· περὶ δὲ τῶν ἐσσομένων οὐδὲ λέγω ἀρχὴν· ἐξώλεες γὰρ δὴ γίνονται. Τοὺς χρῆν, ἐόντας ὁμογλώσσους, κήρυξι τε διαχρεωμένους καὶ ἀγγέλοισι καταλαμβάνειν τὰς διαφορὰς καὶ παντὶ μάλλον ἢ μάχησι· εἰ δὲ πάντως ἔδεε πολεμῆειν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἐξευρίσκειν χρῆν τῇ ἐκάτεροί εἰσι δυσχειρωτότατοι καὶ ταύτῃ πειρᾶν. Τρόπῳ τοίνυν οὐ χρηστῷ Ἕλληνας διαχρεώμενοι
- 35 See also 1.153.
- 36 Gruen (2011).
- 37 Ψαμμήτιχος δὲ πυθόμενος ἐδίωκε· ὡς δὲ κατέλαβε, ἐδέετο πολλὰ λέγων καὶ σφεας θεοὺς πατρώϊους ἀπολιπεῖν οὐκ ἔα καὶ τέκνα καὶ γυναῖκας· τῶν δὲ τίνα λέγεται δείξαντα τὸ αἰδοῖον εἰπεῖν, ἔνθα ἂν τοῦτο ἦ, ἔσσεσθαι αὐτοῖσι ἐνθαῦτα καὶ τέκνα καὶ γυναῖκας.

- 38 But see Lloyd (1976: 129).
 39 Genitals here, or farting as a sign of contempt in 2.162.
 40 There are notable similarities here with 2.30.4.
 41 West (1999).
 42 Hansen (2002: 62–6); Müller (2006: 309–35).
 43 Ryholt (2006: 31–58).
 44 Aly (1921: 66, 255).
 45 I do not have the space here to discuss whether an Egyptian or Persian could indeed have narrated such a story and whether these stories have a non-Greek origin or are merely Greek stories with Greek values attributed to non-Greeks.
 46 Simpson (2003: 450–2).
 47 Lloyd (1988: 213–14); Quaegebeur (1990).
 48 Compare also 3.14 with Aly (1921: 81–2).
 49 For the cultic connections of the Greek myth, see Dubois (1996: 61).
 50 Ὡς δὲ Σκύθαι λέγουσι, νεώτατον πάντων ἐθνέων εἶναι τὸ σφέτερον, τοῦτο δὲ γενέσθαι ὥδε. Ἄνδρα γενέσθαι πρῶτον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ εὐοσμία ἐρήμῳ τῷ οὐνομα εἶναι Ταργίταον· τοῦ δὲ Ταργίταου τούτου τοὺς τοκέας λέγουσι εἶναι... Δία τε καὶ Βορυσθένης τοῦ ποταμοῦ θυγατέρα. Γένεος μὲν τοιούτου δὴ τινος γενέσθαι τὸν Ταργίταον, τούτου δὲ γενέσθαι παῖδας τρεῖς, Λιπόξαιν καὶ Ἀρπόξαιν καὶ νεώτατον Κολάξαϊν. Ἐπὶ τούτων ἀρχόντων ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ φερόμενα χρύσεια ποιήματα, ἀροτρών τε καὶ ζυγὸν καὶ σάγαριν καὶ φιάλην, πεσεῖν ἐς τὴν Σκυθικήν, καὶ τῶν ἰδόντα πρῶτον τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἄσπον ἰέναι βουλόμενον αὐτὰ λαβεῖν, τὸν δὲ χρυσὸν ἐπιόντος καίεσθαι. Ἀπαλλαχθέντος δὲ τούτου προσιέναι τὸν δεύτερον, καὶ τὸν αὐτὶς ταῦτα ποιέειν. Τοὺς μὲν δὴ καιόμενον τὸν χρυσὸν ἀπώσασθαι, τρίτῳ δὲ τῷ νεωτάτῳ ἐπελθόντι κατασβῆναι, καὶ μὴν ἐκεῖνον κομίσει ἐς ἑωυτοῦ· καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἀδελφεοὺς πρὸς ταῦτα συγγνόντας τὴν βασιληίην πᾶσαν παραδοῦναι τῷ νεωτάτῳ.
 51 Dumezil (1978).
 52 Ivantchik (1999b).
 53 For example, that of King Meles of Sardis and the lion (1.84).
 54 For example, that of Croesus and the change of Lydian customs (1.155–6).
 55 See Llewellyn-Jones and Robson (2010).
 56 Lloyd (1988: 79).
 57 West (1998).
 58 Kammerzell (1987). This interesting phenomenon of communicative complexity is not restricted to narrative. Peter Haider has impressively shown how Herodotus' confused description of Lake Moeris (2.149–50) is in effect a transposition in the form of a realistic geographical description of the theological geography of the Egyptian Book of the Fayum: Haider (2001).
 59 Flower (1991).
 60 Lloyd (1988: 104–5).
 61 Spiegelberg (1927: 24).
 62 Gyges was a figure who attracted both Greek and non-Greek stories: see Burkert (2004).
 63 Kindstrand (1981).
 64 Σκύθαι δὲ τοῦ βακχεύειν περὶ Ἑλλήσι ὀνειδίζουσι· οὐ γὰρ φασι οἰκὸς εἶναι θεὸν ἐξευρίσκειν τοῦτον ὅστις μαίνεσθαι ἐνάγει ἀνθρώπους. Ἐπεῖτε δὲ ἐτελέσθη τῷ Βακχείῳ ὁ Σκύλης, διεπρήστευσε τῶν τῆς

- Βορυσθενείτων πρὸς τοὺς Σκύθας λέγων “Ἡμῖν γὰρ καταγελάτε, ὦ Σκύθαι, ὅτι βακχεύομεν καὶ ἡμέας ὁ θεὸς λαμβάνει· νῦν οὗτος ὁ δαίμων καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον βασιλέα λελάβηκε, καὶ βακχεύει τε καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαίνεται. Εἰ δέ μοι ἀπιστέετε, ἔπεσθε, καὶ ὑμῖν ἐγὼ δείξω”.
- 65 Braund (2008).
 66 Πυθόμενοι γὰρ ὡς ὕεται πᾶσα ἡ χώρα τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλ’ οὐ ποταμοῖσι ἄρδεται κατὰ περὶ ἡ σφετέρῃ, ἔφασαν Ἑλληνας ψευσθέντας κοτὲ ἐλπίδος μεγάλης κακῶς πεινήσειν. Τὸ δὲ ἔπος τοῦτο ἐθέλει λέγειν ὡς, εἰ μὴ ἐθελήσει σφι ὕειν ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ’ αὐχμῷ διαχρᾶσθαι, λιμῷ οἱ Ἑλληνες αἰρεθήσονται· οὐ γὰρ δὴ σφι ἐστὶ ὕδατος οὐδεμία ἄλλη ἀποστρόφῃ ὅτι μὴ ἐκ τοῦ Διὸς μῦνον.
 67 Ἀνέθηκε δὲ καὶ ἀναθήματα ὁ Ἀμασις ἐς τὴν Ἑλλάδα, τοῦτο μὲν ἐς Κυρήνην ἀγαλμα ἐπίχρυσον Ἀθηναίης καὶ εἰκόνα ἑωυτοῦ γραφῇ εἰκασμένην, τοῦτο δὲ τῇ ἐν Λίνδῳ Ἀθηναίῃ δύο τε ἀγάλματα λίθινα καὶ θῶρηκα λίνεον ἀξιοθέητον, τοῦτο δ’ ἐς Σάμον τῇ Ἥρῃ εἰκόνας ἑωυτοῦ διφασίας ξυλίνας, αἱ ἐν τῷ νηῷ τῷ μεγάλῳ ἰδρύατο ἐτι καὶ τὸ μέχρις ἐμεῖο, ὅπισθε τῶν θυρέων. Ἐς μὲν νῦν Σάμον ἀνέθηκε κατὰ ξεινίην τὴν ἑωυτοῦ τε καὶ Πολυκράτεος τοῦ Αἰάκεος, ἐς δὲ Λίνδον ξεινίης μὲν οὐδεμιῆς εἵνεκεν, ὅτι δὲ τὸ ἱρὸν τὸ ἐν Λίνδῳ τὸ τῆς Ἀθηναίης λέγεται τὰς <τοῦ> Δαναοῦ θυγατέρας ἰδρύσασθαι, προσσχούσας ὅτε ἀπεδίδρησκον τοὺς Αἰγύπτου παῖδας. Ταῦτα μὲν ἀνέθηκε ὁ Ἀμασις.
 68 Francis and Vickers (1984).
 69 οὐδεμίαν γὰρ εἶναι μηχανὴν ὅπως οὐ τῷ ἀστὲρ ἀγωνιζομένῳ προσθήσονται, ἀδικέοντες τὸν ξείνον. ἀλλ’ εἰ δὴ βούλονται δικαίως τιθέναι καὶ τούτου εἵνεκα ἀπικοῖατο ἐς Αἴγυπτον, ξείνοισι ἀγωνιστῇσι ἐκέλευον τὸν ἀγῶνα τιθέναι, Ἡλείων δὲ μηδενὶ εἶναι ἀγωνίζεσθαι.
 70 SEG XXXVII 994; Masson and Yoyotte (1988).
 71 Harrison (2000).
 72 On the tales of Democedes, see Griffiths (1987); Davies (2010).
 73 On the veracity of Ctesias' presence in the Persian court, see Dorati (1995); on his court tales, see Llewellyn-Jones and Robson (2010).
 74 Müller (2006: 189–224).
 75 Moyer (2002).
 76 Laws, 656d–657a; Davis (1979).
 77 For a similar reading of the story of the Scythian youths and the Amazons (4.110–16), see Ivantchik (1999a: 504).
 78 Scheer (1993). Hebrew stories, such as Genesis 10, show a similar ability to create mythic genealogies linking various people together.
 79 Malkin (1998).
 80 Hicks (1962: 93–7); West (1984).
 81 Mitchell (2001).
 82 Nesselrath (1996; 1999).
 83 Dalley (2001).
 84 Wills (1990); Johnston (2004).
 85 Fales (1993; 1994); Luzzato (1992; 1994).
 86 Christ (1994).
 87 Gruen (1998: 161–7).
 88 West (2003).
 89 The attitude of Christ (1994) is typical.

- 90 Lewis (1977: 14–15).
- 91 In fact, in a recent brilliant article, Johannes Haubold has argued that the use of the Trojan War as a mythological exemplum through which to understand the Persian Wars and the opposition between Greeks and barbarians is likely to be a Persian invention to justify their invasion, which was subsequently taken over and reversed by the victorious Greeks! See Haubold (2007).

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