ABSTRACT The article discusses the principal “Herodotean question” of the completeness of the work done by the historian. How well did Herodotus manage to accomplish his design? Should we regard his work in the form it has reached us as complete and integral? Or does it end abruptly at the events of 479/8 BC, despite “the Father of History” having planned to continue his account of the Greek-Persian wars? Over the last century and a half, pluralism in the views the researchers on the issue of the completeness of Herodotus’ work has emerged. The author ventures some observations on the finale of the *The Histories* and draws our attention to the passage Hdt. 9.121 in which Herodotus emphasizes the fact that the barbarians transgressing the geographical boundaries of Europe had been punished: the cables of the bridges which the Persians had used to tie Asia and Europe were taken to Hellas by the victors. According to the author, the historian’s testimony τὰ ὍΠΛΑ ΤῶΝ ΓΕΦΥΡΈ ῶΝ symbolizes the end of the war against the Barbarian, hence, the accomplishment of Herodotus’ design – the completion of the account of “great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other”.

Key words: Herodotus, Athens, boundaries, bridges, Aeschylus, hybris/arrogance, the Persian Wars, temples, “Herodotean questions”, the last chapter of *The Histories* (Hdt. 9.121 and 122)
The birth of Clio is associated with the name of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, an Ancient Greek traveller, geographer, ethnographer, and “the first historian” who created a monumental historical epic about the confrontation between the East and the West. He is commonly believed to have been born in 484 BC, so, according to the ancient tradition, “the Father of History” must have been born 2500 years ago.

In spite of the centuries-long history of studying Herodotus, there are still lots of questions about the life of the archegetes of historians and his immortal work – such is the fate of classical authors and their works. This essay prepared for the jubilee of “the high-priests of Clio” ventures to examine one of the issues.

I. Introductory remarks:
“The Herodotean question(s)”

The Hellenes came out victorious of the mortal battle with the barbarian conquerors who had invaded Hellas from the East. The new Great war needed its own Homer to glorify the deeds of the heroes of the past and establish for centuries to come what “people had been in our time”. The ancient writers, when choosing topics and developing their plots and genres, modeled themselves on the legendary creator of the Iliad; poets or historiographers seemed to engage in agon with the Poet of poets, seeking to imitate him.²


contemporary science, and it is hardly likely that it will be ever possible to answer this question. Most researchers into hold that Herodotus’ historical work was not completed; they argue that he was to bring his account of the confrontation between the Hellenes and the Persians down to the 449 BC Peace of Callias, the event that, in the current opinion, ended the half-a-century of struggle between the Ancient West and the Oriental Achaemenid Empire.

This is only a hypothesis undoubtedly in need of substantiating. And there will always be new readings and suppositions – more or less dependable, but always limited.

“Herodotean questions” encompass the issues of The Histories’ contexture, of time and sequence of certain logoi, the questions of the design, elaboration and completeness of the work of “the Father of History”. Of course, they are “perennial issues” of the historical science and the source study of Antiquity. Here, again, I propose to discuss one of the principal “Herodotean questions”, that of the fullness of Herodotus’ historical work. I will make some observations about the finale of Herodotus’ epic – the expulsion of the barbarian conquerors from Europe, the victorious return of the Athenians and the symbolic act to mark the end of the war against the Persians.

II. Herodotus 9.121: the clinching sentence and “the formula of victory” in the finale of The Histories

In 9.121, Herodotus tells about the return of the Athenian fleet carrying loot and sums up the last year of the Greek-Persian war:

Τὰ ὅπλα τῶν Γεφυρέων ἀναθήσοντες ἑς τὴν Ἑλλάδα, τὰ τε ἄλλα χρήματα ἄγοντες καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ ὁλὰ τῶν περιφερείων ὡς ἀναβύσσοντες ἑς τὰ ἱππ. Καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἐτὸς τοῦτο οὐδὲν ἐπὶ πλέον τούτων ἐγένετο.  

“After performing these deeds, they (the victorious Greeks – A. S.) sailed back home to Hellas; beside other spoil, they had with them the cables from the bridges, which they intended as offerings in temples. Nothing else, apart from these events, happened that year”.

As to the last sentence with a rare (in no way exclusive)10 use by “the Father of History” of the temporal phrase – καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἐτὸς τοῦτο οὐδὲν ἐπὶ πλέον τούτων ἐγένετο, the researchers differed in their opinions of the temporal location in Hdt. 9.121. Some regarded it as an interpolation in Herodotus’ text, others believed that Herodotus had intended to continue his work on the Greek-Persian wars11 and proposed to consider the last chapter of places in The Histories featuring the phrase ἐπὶ πλέον in Books 6 and 9 published by Stein 1893: 221, ad loc. (see here below, n. 9). While the authors of the classical commentary on Herodotus’ work, W. W. How and J. Wells, ‘disregard’ this unique information in chapter 121 of Book 9 of The Histories, seemingly considering the evidence of the Athenian trophies as insignificant (?) and ignoring the outstanding temporal phrase used by the historian in the finale: καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἐτὸς τοῦτο… ἐγένετο. See the discussion in Sinitsyn 2013a: 44-49.

8 It speaks of the events at the Hellespont in 479/8 BC – the siege and capture of the city of Sestus in Thrace, Chersonese, which ended the war campaign off the coast of Asia Minor (for the discussion of these events, see below).

9 The translations into English here are my own.

10 Hdt. 6.42; 9.41; 9.107; see Stein 1893b: 157, ad loc. Hdt. 9.41: “dieselbe Redeweise” (the definition applies to the above-mentioned monotypic temporal phrases in Herodotus’ work); cf. Hdt. 2.171; 5.51 – Herman Stein, publisher and commentator of Herodotus’ work, also points to the passages containing the phrase οὐδὲν ἐπὶ πλέον τούτων (nil his amplius) (Stein 1894: 150, ad loc. Hdt. 6.42). See also Lipsius 1902: 195-196; Flower, Marincola 2002: 291, ad loc. Hdt. 9.107 and 310, ad loc. Hdt. 9.121. Reginald Walter Macan, for a good reason, regarded the phrase οὐδὲν … τοῦτων as typical of the style of “the Father of History”, the classical scholar believed that for Herodotus it was a sustained stylistic device, a formula: Macan 1908b: 679, ad loc. Hdt. 9.41 (‘is a formula’); cf. ibidem, 811-812, ad loc. Hdt. 9.107 (‘the formula’). And C. Dewald defines this temporal clincher in Herodotus’ work as “formulaic expression” (Dewald 1997: 63 = Dewald 2013: 385).

11 By way of illustration, Lipsius 1902: 195-202. A hundred years ago, the German classical philologist, befuddled as he may have been, judging from the tone of his article, wrote: “Es ist mir von jeher unverständlich gewesen, wie man immer wieder behaupten kann, dass Herodots Geschichtswerk uns in abgeschlossener Gestalt vorliegt. Zum Gegenbeweise genügt, wie ich das...
The Histories (9.122) as a peculiar “introduction” to a further account. The debate over the finale has been on for about two hundred years, and the main object of discord is the extent of (in)completeness of the work of the Halicarnassian historian.12

The contentious sentence occurring in the penultimate chapter of The Histories (Hdt. 9.121.2) seems of no great import, as such. At the end of the book Herodotus tells about the siege and the capture of Sestus by the Hellenes (9.114-119) and the homeward voyage of the Athenian fleet. Having narrated the last significant instance of the late autumn, the historian sums up: “Nothing else, apart from these events, happened that year” (9.121.2). These last words virtually mean that the author, apart from what he had reported, was not going to describe any other events that happened over that period. Herodotus must have considered them of no consequence for his main subject—the history of the war between the Hellenes and the Persians.13

Sometimes historians note that the tone of this clincher in Hdt. 9.121.2 seems intentionally stern and dry, “bookish”, resembling the language of chronicles.14 Modern scholars have had different opinions. Some regarded it as an interpolation in the text of Herodotus,15 other researchers believed that this temporal phrase suggested that Herodotus intended to continue his work,16 thereby they proposed to consider the end of The Histories as a peculiar prooemium to further narration, but the versions of this virtual “sequel” have been different.17


13 Cf. Flower, Marincola 2002: 310, ad loc. Hdt. 9.121: “The implication of these words is that other things took place during the next and subsequent years, things which Herodotus will not narrate”.

14 Thus, Carolyn Dewald characterized this phrase in Hdt. 9.121.2 as “a dry annalistic summary” (Dewald 1997: 63 = Dewald 2013: 285); and the German scholar Klaus Rosen made a remark about Herodotus’ finale: “Seiner Schlusszene fügte Herodot noch den nüchternen chronikartigen Satz an (italics mine – A. S.)”, Rosen 2009: 1-2.


16 E.g., Lateiner 1989: 45: “Thus some critics believe that Herodotus has not put the finishing touch to his work, because the annalistic formula that generally introduces information for the following year, ‘nothing further happened in that year’ (9.121), appears at the end where it presents an inelegant conclusion for the events reported”.

17 See opinion review (selectively): Jacoby 1913: 374-375 (with reference to G. Busolt, Ed. Meyer, U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, T. Gomperz, H. Stein, J.H. Lipsius, O. Müller and other scholars of the 19th-20th centuries); Immerwahr 1966: 145 and n. 188; Borukhovich 2002: 598: “An account of the battle of Sestus ends, rather, stops short, Herodotus’ work (italics mine – A. S.) … There are grounds to suppose that Herodotus was going to continue his work (no explanations at all – A. S.)”; Lateiner 1989: 119: “There are traces of a systematic chronology…, and the penultimate chapter 9.121 oddly presages the later annalistic framework (perhaps borrowed from, or added by, a chronicler)…” (with references to R.W. Macan, J.E. Powell, C. Hignett in
Some scholars ventured an opinion that the finale of Herodotus’ work suggested a sequel – the history of a different hegemony, this time not that of the Persians but that of the Athenians, which asserted itself in the mid-5th century BC (slightly varied, this hypothesis has been gaining popular of late). Igor E. Surikov thinks that this temporal phrase belongs to Herodotus, but he notes that the turn of speech “though not typical of the Herodotus style, fits well with Thucydides, who, contrary to his predecessor, narrated events year by year”. In his observations about the historian’s failure to execute the design – hence, the incompleteness of his work, I.E. Surikov relies on M.L. Gasparov’s hypothesis of the incompleteness in toto of the “pedimental architectonics” of Herodotus’ The Histories. According to Surikov, the temporal clincher occurring in the finale of The Histories was borrowed by Herodotus from his younger contemporary, Thucydides, who, as is well-known, had developed the chronological method of writing history. And if so, Surikov makes another logical move, there is a reason to speak about the intention of “the Father of History” to use Thucydides’ chronological principle in accounting the subsequent clashes of the Greeks and the Persians – up to 449 BC. Surikov refers to W. Desmond’s opinion, but advances his paradoxical hypothesis about “borrowing”.

I demonstrated in another article that such a temporal method in Hdt. 9.121.2 is not in the least unique in Herodotus’ writing, and suggested that Thucydides, familiar with Herodotus’ work, may have adopted this method (just outlined by “the Father of History”) and then developed his chronological method of writing history.

Lateiner 1989: 257, n. 30; Herington 1991: 149-160 (the author begins his article with presenting a range of opinions of the researchers of the 1980s on the issue of the finale of The Histories of Herodotus: K.H. Waters, D. Asheri, J. Gould et al.: ibidem, pp. 149 ff.;) Moles 1996: 271-277; Dewald 1997 (provides the most complete review of the views on the issue: ibidem, p. 63, n. 13); Desmond 2004: passim, see p. 19: “the stories intended as interludes, preludes to further narrative (italics mine – A. S.)”; with literature Desmond 2004: esp. pp. 19-20, nn. 2, 3, 4, 36 ff.; Rood 2007b: 116-117: “Herodotus’ story ends with strong hints that a new story of the Athenian rise to power is starting: nothing further may have happened in that year, but the story of the Athenian rise to naval hegemony would continue” (here with reference to D. Boedeker, J. Herington, J.L. Moles, C. Dewald et al.); Rood 2007b: 154-155; Rosen 2009: Stroetsky 2010: 114, 120; Munson 2013: 27-28; Andreev 2018: 99 (along with V.G. Borukhovich): “It is hardly likely that Herodotus was going to stop his narration short exactly at this point (the siege of Sestus by the Greeks – A. S.). Rather, he just failed to end it properly. Certain cursory remarks in the text of The Histories point to the possibility of further development of the topic (italics mine – A. S.”); Harrison, Irwin 2018: 10; Irwin 2018: 279-334 (review of works on the content and purpose of the final chapters in Herodotus’ The Histories, “which have so resoundingly established a number of levels upon which the last chapters of the Histories serve as a masterful conclusion to Herodotus’ work.”, p. 282).


20 See critical comments on this hypothesis in my works: Sinitsyn 2012a; 2013a; 2013b; 2017a; 2017b.
21 Surikov 2009: 223-224; 2010a: 362-363; 2011: 278 – on all occasions with references to Mikhail L. Gasparov’s assertion 1989 and 1997. “We cannot help but feel: M.L. Gasparov is right, Herodotus wanted to continue narrating the events of the Greek-Persian wars till their actual end – the Peace of Callias in 449 BC. Moreover, he apparently intended to change the manner of narration of the events following 478 BC, making it stricter, that is, to narrate the course of further events year by year (sic! – A. S.). This last period of the creative biography of “the Father of History” falls on the 420s BC, when Thucydides started his work. It is not improbable that it was the manner of narration used by his younger contemporary that had influenced the Halicarnassian” (Surikov 2010a: 362-363; 2011: 278; also in his previous works Surikov 2007a: 143-151; 2009: 223-224). Cf. Munson 2013: 27: “It is unlikely that Herodotus’ work was interrupted by external circumstances, as some have thought. We may rather speculate that his story had an ending he could not write, where the definitive cessation of hostilities between the Greeks and Persia (perhaps marked by the Peace of Callias of 449) overlapped inextricably with disturbing developments within the Greek world. He chose, at any rate, to close his work in a provisional way, which confirms the overall character of the Histories as an opera aperta”.

23 Here of interest are Philip A. Stadter’s observations in the article “Thucydides as ‘A Reader’ of Herodotus” (Stadter 2012a: 39-66). See: “Finally, after the return of the Athenian fleet to Greece, the campaigns of the year end (IX. 121). Herodotus found that the best way to treat Xerxes’ expedition was by summer and winters. Thucydides, in writing his history, decided to use the procedure utilized by Herodotus for the Persian campaign, but went one step further. Instead of introducing the seasons and years casually, as part of the narrative, he decided to make these notices formal and regular, establishing an unmistakably clear chronological framework” (Stadter 2012a: 45). “In interpreting Herodotus, Thucydides
But the penultimate chapter of *The Histories* – 9.121 – is significant not least because of Herodotus’ mentioning the *cables from the bridges* once spanning the Hellespont that the Greeks captured: “They had with them the cables from the bridges (τὰ ὀθλα τῶν γεφυρῶν), which they intended as offerings in temples”. The very mentioning here of these linking cables (which as such seem to be an insignificant detail noted in passing) appears most interesting.

It should be noted that here Herodotus does not specify other numerous trophies that the Athenians brought from Asia Minor. And the booty of war during this lengthy expedition must have been quite large (!). The English classical scholar commenting upon *The Histories*, R. W. Macan, glosses χρήματα featuring in Hdt. 9.121.1 as “The spoils, chiefly from Mycale – where they had found θησαυρούς τινας χρημάτων”. In Hdt. 9.106 says that in 479 BC, after the defeat of the barbarians at Mycale, the Greek army scooped a large profit (hic: θησαυρούς τινας χρημάτων). The victors put on the seashore the loot containing, according to our source, the Persian military chests. But upon their return the Athenians had brought the trophies captured not only in the battle at Mycale but in several battles for the islands and during the last campaign in Thrace related by Herodotus in the final logos (9.114-119).

Yet, Herodotus calls the whole loot collectively – τὰ τε ἄλλα χρήματα. And he emphasizes that the victors had τὰ ὀθλα τῶν γεφυρῶν on board their ships. Presumably, these particular trophies were of great importance for both the historian and his contemporaries, including those who had listened to *The Histories* and who had taken part in “great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other”.

In Herodotus’ work

Various bridges and stream crossings are frequently found in *The Histories*. According to *A Lexicon to Herodotus* by John E. Powell, the historian uses various forms of the word γέφυρα 42 times in his work:25 on six occasions in the first book, once in books 3 and 5, while the fourth book has the greatest number (18) of γέφυρα. The famous Scythian logos tells about Darius’ march to the land of Scythians, about the construction and the use of bridges across the Thracian Bosporus and the river Istrus. The pontoon-bridge on the isthmus of Bosporus is a grandiose monument created by the Samian engineer, Mandrocles, was the first to connect Europe with Asia (Hdt. 4.87-89).26

The word γέφυρα occurs 16 times in the books 7, 8 and 9 – in accounts of the construction in 481/0 BC of the bridges connecting Asia and Europe, of the great army’s crossing the Hellespont, of the march westward and the Persians’ crossing the river Strymon in the Thracian coast,27 and finally, of the destruction of the bridges across the Hellespont in 479 BC, the execution of Artayctes on the spot where Xerxes ordered to construct a bridge, of the intention of Athenians to consecrate the cables from the Hellespont bridges in the temples, described in the finale of *The Histories*.

Herodotus describes graphically the debate at the Persian State Council over the issue of constructing the passage over the Hellespont to march off against Athens (Hdt. 7.8-12).28 The historian makes Artabanus, Xerxes’ uncle, warn the King about the deadly danger that may befall Xerxes and his army if the Greeks succeed in destroying the bridge: this will intercept the retreat of the Persians from Europe to Asia.29

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25 Powell 1966: 66, s.v. γέφυρα.
28 It is one of the examples in *The Histories* where Herodotus gives an account of the open debates conducted by the Persians. For the discussion of the scene of the council of the Persian nobles, see: Jong 2001: 104-112; Schellenberg 2009: 136-139; Grethlein 2009: 195-218; Stahl 2012: 125-153; Zali 2015: 151-156.
“You will bridge the Hellespont (so you say) and march your army through Europe to Hellas (ζεύγας φης τόν Ἐλλησπόντον ἐλάν στρατόν διὰ τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐς τήν Ἐλλάδα”), – says the Persian sage at the assembly summoned by Xerxes. – “Now I will suppose that matters have so fallen out that you are worsted either by land or by sea, or even both; for the men are said to be valiant, and well may we guess that it is so, seeing that so great a host, that followed Datis and Artaphrenes to Attica, was destroyed by the Athenians alone. Be it, then, granted that they win not success both by sea and by land; but if they attack with their ships and prevail in a sea-fight, and then sail to the Hellespont and thereafter break your bridge, that, O king, is the hour of peril” (Hdt. 7.10β). 30

Prior to this (Hdt. 7.10α), Artabanus reminds Xerxes of the unfortunate expedition led by Darius to the Scythian lands; it was Darius who made the first attempt to link Asia to Europe by bridges and who feared lest he be unable to withdraw his army from Europe should the passage be destroyed. And no other than Artabanus, the brother of late Darius I, was advising the King against launching a campaign against the Scythians:

“It is from no wisdom of my own that I thus conjecture; it is because I know what disaster was that which wellnigh once overtook us, when your father, making a highway over the Thracian Bosporus, and bridging the river Ister, crossed over to attack the Scythians. At that time the Scythians used every means of entreating the Ionians, who had been charged to guard the bridges of the Ister, to break the way of passage; and then, if Histiaeus the despot of Miletus had consented to the opinion of the other despots and not withstood it, the power of Persia had perished” (Hdt. 7.10γ). 31

Artabanus, according to Herodotus, also warns Xerxes, his nephew, of the gods who may feel jealous and wish to punish presumptuous people:

“You see how the god smites with his thunderbolt creatures of greatness more than common, nor suffers them to display their pride, but such as are little move him not to anger; and you see how it is ever on the tallest buildings and trees that his bolts fall; for it is heaven’s way to bring low all things of surpassing bigness. Thus a numerous host is destroyed by one that is lesser, the god of his jealousy sending panic fear or thunderbolt among them, whereby they do unworthily perish; for the god suffers pride in none but himself” (Hdt. 7.10c). 32

These words uttered by the Persian sage were meant to come true: Xerxes’ arrogance would be punished. The historian and poet Herodotus had had put the words about the King’s superhybris into the mouth of the Persian King: “... If we subdue those men (Athenians – A. S.), and their neighbours who dwell in the land of Pelops the Phrygian, we shall make the borders of Persian territory and of the firmament of heaven to be the same; for no land that the sun beholds will lie on our borders, but I will make all to be one country, when I have passed over the whole of Europe” (Hdt. 7.8γ). 33

All this – both the debate at the assembly of the Persian nobles called by the King, and the ghosts seen by Xerxes and Artabanus in their night dreams, who come to urge them to set out on a march against Hellas (Hdt. 7.12-18) – is certainly an artistic improvisation used by “the Father of History”, a narrative device meant for the reader, the reader who knew about the tragic outcome of the Persian hysteretic expansion. 34 But it is of crucial importance to note that such predictions and such writings on the wall are bound to come true. In Book 8, when the outcome of the barbarian invasion has already been foregone, the author repeats the warning he has put in Artabanus’ mouth, thereby making it prophetic.

A parallel between dialogues of Solon and Croesus in Book I of The Histories and those of Artabanus and Xerxes in Book 7 has been frequently drawn (about this, see Rutherford 2012: 24, with references to literature). I. E. Surikov calls the Herodotus a barbarian ‘vis-à-vis’ of Solon, the Hellenian sage. From the recent works on Artabanus: Rutherford 2012: 24-26; Stahl 2012: 132, 137-149; Baragwanath 2012: 295-297; Branscombe 2013: 173-174; Zali 2015: 152 ff.; Pelling 2016: 77, 78, 80 f., 82.

31 Godley 1968: 317 and 319. Herodotus gives a detailed account of the significance of this crossing for rescuing Darius’ army (4.133 and 134; 4.136-141), depicting the drama being acted out at the bridges when the Persians were retreating during their first march to Europe and the horror that struck Darius’ soldiers when the found out that the bridge they had relied on had been destroyed during the night (Hdt. 4.140).
33 Godley 1968: 311.
34 Desmond 2004: 29; see also Papadimitropoulos 2008: 452 ff.
Map 1. The Balkan Greece, the Aegean Basin and Asia Minor

Map 2. Europe and Asia in the Area of the Hellespont and the Propontis
The historian puts it in the following way: after the Persian defeat at Salamis, the King makes a decision to retreat, remembering that the enemy might destroy the crossing over the Hellespont and fearing lest they should be cut off from Asia: “When Xerxes was aware of the calamity that had befallen him, he feared lest the Greeks (by Ionian counsel or their own devising) might sail to the Hellespont to break his bridges (ἐς τὸν Ἑλλάσποντον λύσοντες τάς γεφύρας), and he might be cut off in Europe and in peril of his life; and so he planned flight” (Hdt. 8.97).35

The word τὰ δόσλα (in all cases – pluralis) meaning connecting ‘cables’ (‘cords’, ‘ropes’) used in the construction of the crossing is found four times in The Histories by Herodotus – twice at the beginning of Book 7 and twice at the end of Book 9, exclusively in Herodotus’ accounts of the bridges between Asia and Europe: Hdt. 7.25; 7.36 (ter) and Hdt. 9.115; 9.121.36 The use in the Ancient Greek literature of the word ὤπλον (usually pluralis – δόσλα) as a nautical term meaning ‘cables’, ‘ropes’, ‘cords’ or ‘halyards’ is found in works of the earliest authors – Homer and Hesiod.37

Hdt. 7.25; 7.33-34; 7.36 tell in good detail about the two attempts to erecit bridges connecting Asia and Europe, about making cables (δόσλα) for the bridges from papyrus fibres (βυβλινα) and white flax (λευκόλινον).38 The erection of these immense constructions connecting the two continents is one of the highest water-marks of the engineering capabilities achieved in the ancient world.39

According to the historian, the Phoenicians and the Egyptians were charged with the making of cables (Hdt. 7.25; 7.33 and 34). Herodotus specifies the material the powerful cables were made of,40 their size and weight, their functions in the erecting of the crossing over the Hellespont.41

“Having so done (the vessels had been moored side by side in the strait – A. S.), they stretched the cables from the land, twisting them taut with wooden windlasses; and they did not as before keep the two kinds apart,42 but assigned for each bridge two cables of flax and four of papyrus. All these were of the same thickness and fair appearance, but the flaxen were heavier in their proportion, a cubit thereof weighing a talent” (Hdt. 7.36).43

N.G.L. Hammond and L.J. Roseman hold that “designing and construction of these unique bridges was within the compass of the engineers of those times”.44

35 Godley 1969: 95. On the retreat of the Persian army across the Thracian lands, M. Zahrnt notes: “That the Persians had to make a detour via the Bosporus can be explained by the events that were happening simultaneously in the area of the Hellespont: after the Greek fleet had totally destroyed the last Persian ships at the cape of Mycale, it sailed to the north and, after a lengthy siege, captured the city of Sestus and won the crossing of the Hellespont (Hdt. 9.114-121)” (Zahrnt 2015: 39).

36 Cf. Powell 1966: 266, s.v. δόσλα (1), points out that Herodotus uses the word in its first meaning, ‘gear’, for τῶν γεφύρων (hic – ‘cables’), and in its second meaning as ‘arms, hoplite weaponry’, etc. (Powell 1966: 266-267, s.v. ἄσλα (2)). ὰσλα in its second meaning occurs in The Histories 35 times.

37 Liddell, Scott 1996: 1240, s.v. ὰσλον (1): ‘a ship’s tackle, tackling’, especially ‘ropes, halyards’ (with reference to the sources, including The Histories by Herodotus). In greater detail: Amandry 1946: 6 (with references to the places in the texts by Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius of Rhodes, Hippocrates, lexicographers and other authors).


40 Hdt. 7.25: καὶ ὰσλά ἐς τὰς γεφύρας βυβλινα τα καὶ λευκόλινον. Cf. Hdt. 7.34 and 7.36 (with commentaries).

41 On the Hellespont and its area, I refer to a number of recent works: Tiveros 2008: 1-154; Surikov 2013a: 3-44; Surikov 2013b: 24-38; Minchin 2017: 66-68 (with a map on p. 67), 72 ff.; van Rookhuijzen 2018: 61-89.

42 The way it happened during the first throwing of the bridges, when “a great storm arising broke the whole work to pieces, and destroyed all that had been done” (Hdt. 7. 34). Here Herodotus points out that a double bridge had been constructed from Abydus (ibidem): “the Phoenicians one of flaxen cables, and the Egyptians the second, which was of papyrus (τὴν μὲν λευκόλινον Φοίνικες, τὴν δ’ ἑτέρην τὴν βυβλινὴν Αἰγύπτιον)” (Godley 1968: 347). See Stoneman 2015: 128 ff.

43 Godley 1968: 351.

IV. The trophies of the Persian War and temples: the sentence from the source and its variations

The expedition to the bridge over the Hellespont initially had been a joint venture of the Athenians and the Spartans (see Hdt. 9.106; 9.114). After finding out, when already at the place, that the crossing had been broken down, the Spartan army headed by Leotychides wasted no time to sail to Hellas,45 but the Athenians stayed and, under the command of Xanthippus, crossed the Hellespont from Abydus (the town on the Asian side of the Hellespont) to the Thracian Chersonese (the eastern coast of the Strait).46 There they immediately lay siege to Sestus (Hdt. 9.114-118; 9.119; cf. Thuc. 1.89.2).47 After the town had surrendered, they established control over the area.

Herodotus frequently points out that it was only the Athenian army48 that took part in the siege, and it returned with the cables from the bridges. The victorious Athenians sailed ες την Ε’λλαδα intending to dedicate they trophies in temples (ες τα ιρα). But the historian does not say they were the Athenian τα ιρα.

Contemporary translations sometimes render this sentence of Herodotus in such a way as to suggest that the captured cables were meant solely for Athenian temples. For example, let us look at several well-knows translations. Thus, A.D. Godley from the edition The Loeb Classical Library (1925): “…they (Athenians – A. S.) sailed away to Hellas, carrying with them the tackle of the bridges to be dedicated in their temples”49; and close to it is the English version by George Rawlinson (1858): “This done, they (Athenians – A. S.) sailed back to Greece, carrying with them, besides other treasures, the shore cables from the bridges of Xerxes (with comments on the text – A. S.), which they wished to dedicate in their temples”.50

Similarly, in the series Bibliothek der Antike translated by Th. Braun: “… insbesondere nahmen sie (die Athener – A. S.) auch die Taue von der Brücken mit, um sie als Weihgeschenke in ihren Tempeln aufhängen zu können”51 the same was in the old version by F. Lange: “… vornehmlich aber das Gerät von den Brücken, um es in ihre Tempel zu weihen”52 and one more version by Josef Feix in Tusculum: “Sie (die Athener – A. S.) führten die erbeuteten Schätze mit, besonders die Geräte von den Brücken, um sie in ihren Tempeln zu weihen”.53 See also, for example, in the French translation by Ph.-E. Legrand in the series Les belles lettres (1955): “Cela fait, les Athéniens retournèrent en Grèce, emportant, entre autres objets précieux, les câbles qui avaient servi pour les ponts, qu’ils avaient l’intention de consacrer dans leurs sanctuaires (which unambiguously means Athenian temples – A. S.)”.54

All these instances imply that the sanctuaries to which the victors intended to offer the cables from the “intercontinental bridges” are theirs, that is, Athenian.

The old Russian translation by Th. Mishchenko puts it differently: “… эллинъ отплыли в Элладу, причем взяли все сокровища и канаты от мостов для пожертвования в храмы” (“…the Hellenes sailed off to Hellas, and they had taken all the treasures and the cables from the bridges to offer them to sanctuaries…”).55 Close to this version is G. A. Stratanovsky’s translation (1972): “… афиняне отплыли в Элладу. Они взяли с собой среди другой добычи также и канаты от мостов; [эти канаты] они хотели посвятить в храмы” (“… the Athenians sailed to Hellas. They had with them besides other loot the cables

45 On further relations between the Athenians and the Persians, see Wiesehöfer 2006: 658 ff. (Thucydides and the Persians); Blösel 2012: 221-222.
46 The difference in the actions performed by the Greek allies in this case is very indicative: the slow Spartans returned home, but the enterprising and mobile Athenians set heart on facing the matter out. Thucydides tells of the difference in the politics of the two contending poles in a well-known passage from Book 1 of The History of the Peloponnesian War, putting it in the mouth of the Corinthians: Thuc. 1.70-71, esp. 70.4-5: “They (the Athenians – A. S.) are characterized by swiftness, you (the Lacedaemonians – A. S.) are inactive. They are never at home, you are never from it: for they hope by their advance to endanger what you have left behind. They are swift to follow up a success, and slow to recoil from a reverse…” See commentaries ad loc. and literature: Classen, Steup 1919: 197-198; Gomme 1945: 230; Jaffe 2017: 122. Close to it is the statement made by Thucydides himself without attributing to his heroes (8.96.5) – on the contrast between Athens and Sparta. Cf. Thuc. 1.69.2, 4; 1.84.1.
47 On the siege of Sestus by the Athenians, see the recent papers: Vasilev 2015: 212-216.

51 Braun 1985: II, 341.
52 Lange 1885: II, 368.
from the bridges; they wanted to offer [these cables] to sanctuaries).  

The French translation by P.-H. Larcher goes like this: “Les Athéniens retournèrent, après cette expédition en Grèce avec un riche butin, et consacrèrent dans les temples (the Athenian or the Greek temples? – A. S.) les agrès des vaisseaux qui avaient servi aux ponts” or the English one by G. C. Macaulay: “… they sailed away to Hellas, taking with them, besides other things, the ropes also of the bridges, in order to dedicate them as offerings in the temples…” I shall adduce another one of French translation: “… ils (les Athéniens – A. S.) reprirent la route de la Grèce, portant avec eux grands trésors et richesses, ensemble l’équipage des ponts, pour les consacrer parmi les temples”.  

All these versions suggest not particular Athenian sanctuaries but certain Greek temples.  

The number of translations could easily be greatly increased. But even a random choice of a dozen available examples of the sentence which we are interested in shows that the interpretations of the ‘adressees’ of τὰ ἱρά where the victors wished to deliver their offerings are different. Pierre Giguet makes an interesting interpretation: “les Athéniens … pour les consacrer en divers temples” (“to consecrate it [i.e. the cables from Xerxes’ bridges – A. S.] in different temples”). Could the French scholar have thought that the Athenians had distributed the distinguished trophies of the Persian war among several Hellenic temples? Including the Athenian sanctuaries? – And, again, it should be pointed out that the text of The Histories does not make it clear.

V. What temples did the victors make the offering of the cables from the bridges to? Was Delphi the destination?

Over a century ago, R.W. Macon, an English commentator of Herodotus, noted that the new purpose of these τὰ ἱρά τῶν γεφυρέων was not quite clear since all Athenian temples, likewise the polis itself, lay in ruins.

In the middle of the past century, the French archaeologist Pierre Armandry advanced a hypothesis that the cables from the bridges which had been taken in 478 BC from Asia Minor to the Greek continent had been sent to the sanctuary at Delphi. The inscription on the Athenian portico in Delphi says that the Athenians had dedicated ὅπλα and ἄκρωτηρια (the fragments of the ships) captured from (some) enemies. According to P. Armandry, the record of τὰ ἱρά on the Athenian Stoa can be tallied with the very τὰ ἱρὰ τῶν γεφυρέων mentioned by Herodotus in the finale of The Histories (9.121.1). Hence, the fragments of the inscription and the monument itself, according to P. Armandry, date from to the events of the early 470s BC.

This hypothesis had achieved prominence and was supported by W.K. Pritchett, J.P. Barron and some other scholars. J.P. Barron, the author of “The Liberation of Greece” in Volume IV of The Cambridge Ancient History (Second edition), argued that part of the war trophies (cables from Xerxes’ bridges and fragments of the enemy’s ships) had decorated the stylobate of the new temple of Athena in Acropolis, but “what is almost certain is that parts of the cables, interspersed with stern-ornaments from the ships destroyed at Mycale, were hung at Delphi on posts erected against the polygonal retaining wall of the temple terrace and protected from the elements by a pretty stoa of the Ionic order.” Yet it is not clear what time this dedication refers to. J. Walsh had a good reason to point out that if the dedicatory inscription made by the Athenians in Delphi had been made by the victors...
in the Greek-Persian wars and if these had been the same very trophies that the Athenians brought in 478 BC from the Hellespont, the donors would not have failed to indicate that the τὰ ἕλπιδα καὶ τάξιστάρια had been captured from the Medians, to begin with. Second, ὅπλα, referred to in this source, must mean not ‘gear’, ‘cables’ or ‘ropes’ (as Herodotus had it), but, rather, in its common sense, ‘weapons’. It would be more logical to assume that in the sanctuary at Delphi, together with the decorations from the captured ships, the armour of the vanquished was dedicated to demonstrate this victory to all visitors of this temple. And finally, the main point of the discussion boils down to the following: we do not know which vanquished enemy is alluded to in this inscription.

The study of the archaeological, epigraphical and art-historical evidence does not allow for the exact dating of either the monument or the event related to this Athenian dedication. Epigraphic analysis allows one to assume that the inscription was made between the last third of the 6th century BC and the mid-5th century BC. Some researchers consider it more likely that the Athenians took the trophies in question not from the Persians but from certain rivals among the Hellenes themselves.

The text of the inscriptions has the word in its plural form – anonymous πολέμιοι. It is on the grounds that the text of the dedicatory inscription and the penultimate Chapter of Herodotus’ The Histories have τὰ ὅπλα that P. Amandry feels justified to establish the date of the construction of the Athenian stoa (Amandry 1946: 6 ss.). “… Je considère comme acquis que ces ἕλπιδα (in the text of the inscription – A. S.) étaient les câbles des ponts de l’Hellespont, accrochés au mur polygonal, avec les rostres des bateaux perses, au retour de la croisière de la flotte, en 478, et que telle est, en conséquence, la date de la construction du portique (Delphes – A. S.)” (Amandry 1946: 6): “Aussi est-il naturel que les Athéniens aient consacré à Delphes non pas une statue ou un trépied, mais les câbles eux-mêmes” (Amandry 1946: 7).


The text of the inscriptions has the word in its plural form – anonymous πολέμιοι.

Scott 2010: 96, n. 110: “Its (J. Walsh – A. S.) reason for dedication, given the problems with date, is uncertain, particularly as its inscription does not name an enemy (or enemies) whom the Athenians had defeated – A. S.”

Here I rely on the opinion offered by experts who have analyzed this document (the works are cited in note 65).


Lattimore 2010: 461: “The Athenian Stoa at Delphi – little more than a display case for trophies – was long dated just after the Persian war but now appears to have been built around mid-century, for spoils from fellow Greeks rather than Persians” (with reference to Walsh’s article of 1986).

J. Walsh maintained that the Stoa had been erected in the 450s and he dated this inscription from the times of the First Peloponnesian War. S. Lattimore is also inclined to date this unique epigraphic evidence from the mid-5th century BC (though with some reservations). O. Hansen put forward a hypothesis that this dedication may have been spurred not by a particular war conflict but by Athenian victories in total. The text has τῶν πολέμιων – without indicating a particular enemy (or enemies) – and this seems to reinforce O. Hansen’s assumption that this dedication in the sanctuary could have been made to commemorate victories in a series of conflicts (in the first half of the 5th century BC we know of several victories won by the Athenians).

Thus, the dating of the dedicatory inscription remains an open question. We have no sufficient grounds to believe that τὰ ὅπλα (τῶν γεφυρέων), mentioned by Herodotus, which by the will of Xerxes had once linked Europe and Asia, later became the decoration at the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi.

VI. The destroyed City of Pallas Athena and the trophies of the War.
The destination – Athens?

Which temples were the trophies of the Persian war dedicated as offerings in? The above-cited note made by R.W. Macan (see above, note 61) stands to reason: where were the Athenians shipping the cables of the bridges of the Hellespont
if their sanctuaries had been destroyed by the barbarians.\textsuperscript{80} The English commentator makes this explanatory remark with reference to the passage by Thucydidēs 1.89.3, which says that “For of the encircling wall only small portions were left standing,\textsuperscript{81} and most of the houses were in ruins (τοῦ τε γύρος περιβόλου βραχέα εἰστήκει καὶ οἰκίας αἱ μὲν πολλαὶ ἐπεκτάκοσαν), only a few remaining in which the chief men of the Persians had themselves taken quarters”.\textsuperscript{82}

Another ancient, later testimony to the damage caused by the Persians in Athens and, for that matter, in the whole of Attica in 480-479 BC which researchers tend to refer to belongs to Diodorus Siculus’ The Library of History (11.28.1-6). Drawing upon his own sources, the Sicilian historian pictures a scene of total devastation and destruction of the Athenian polis and khora: “Mardonios in his fury at them laid waste the entire countryside, leveled the city, and totally destroyed any temples that had been left standing” (τὴν χώραν ἅπασαν κατέφθει καὶ τὴν νότια κατέσκαψε καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ τὰ καταλελειμμένα παντελῶς ἐλυμήνατο).\textsuperscript{83}

A recent comment on Book 9 of Herodotus’ The Histories made by Michael A. Flower and John Marincola runs: “… Mardonius determined to demolish as much of Athens as he could… Although Herodotus is probably exaggerating for effect, the general picture is confirmed by Thucydidēs (1.89.3)”.\textsuperscript{84} Even here Herodotus remains our main source; compare in this regard Peter Funke’s remark: “Unsere Kenntnisse über das wahre Ausmaß der in der Perserkriegszeit angerichteten Verwüstungen halten sich in Grenzen. Sieht einmal von der Schilderung des Aischylhos (i.e., his tragedy The Persians – A. S.) und den zahlreichen einschlägigen Notizen Herodots ab, aus denen die späteren Autoren weitestgehend schöpfen, so bleiben eigentlich nur noch die archäologischen Befunde, die zwar durchaus eine große Aussagekraft besitzen können, die allerdings kaum ausreichen, um generelle Aussagen zu treffen (with examples and discussion – A. S.). … Bei der Einschätzung der persischen Zerstörungen in Griechenland bleiben wir daher letztlich doch auf die erwähnten Darlegungen Herodots angewiesen, in denen er nicht müde wird, die Verwüstungen vor allem der griechischen Heiligtümer durch die Perser hervorzuheben”.\textsuperscript{85}

R.W. Macan’s remark was repeated, decades later, by P. Amandry (without referring to the English scholar). As was said above, the French scholar himself upheld the “Delphian version” of this dedication. His message is the same: if the Attic temples had been destroyed, if the Acropolis lay in ruins, and the Delian League had not been formed, what sanctuaries could the Athenians send the same very cables of the bridges to in 478 BC?\textsuperscript{86}

Telling about the retreat of the barbarians from Attica, Herodotus depicts a horrifying picture of the fire in the City of Pallas.\textsuperscript{87} Aeschylus tells poetically about the devastation of the Attic sanctuaries – burned down temples, ruined altars and smashed sacred idols. In The Persians he puts into the mouth of the Shadow of Darius the prophetic words about the punishment awaiting Xerxes’ soldiers for their sacrilegious deeds...
(Aesch. Pers. 809-814): “For, on reaching the land of Hellas, restrained by no religious awe, they ravaged the images of the gods and gave their temples to the flames. Altars have been destroyed, statues of the gods have been overthrown from their bases in utter ruin and confusion. Wherefore having evil wrought, they suffer in no less measure; and other evils are still in store…”

The anti-Persian ideas cultivated in Hellas during the Greek-Persian wars show the conquering barbarians as miscreants ruthlessly burning down the ancient temples. The worst sacrilege on the part of the Persians was the destruction of the Athenian Acropolis. “The worst religious crime, especially from the viewpoints of Herodotus and the Athenians, – writes Eduard V. Rung, – was surely the devastation and burning of the sanctuary of Pallas Athena at the Athenian Acropolis, which they committed on the order of King Xerxes in 480 BC (τῷ ιρὸν συλῆμαν τοὺς ἱεροδότους τῆς ἀκρόπολιν), having murdered those who took refuge in the sanctuary (τοῖς ἱεροδοτοῖς ἔφονεοι) (Hdt. 8.53)”. As O. Kulishova remarks, “after the destruction of Athens the Greek propaganda must have presented the Persians as” destroyers, robbers, desecrators of shrines, criminals before the Hellenic gods. Formed in the first half of the 5th century BC, this myth was still topical in Athens a century later, in the mid-4th century BC. The philosopher Plato in his major work The Laws (written at the end of his life) expounds on the satrapic nature of the Persian kingdom and Persian despotists, characterizing them

88 Deratani 1946: 11 – On Xerxes condemned by Darius for the sacrilege: “these actions, from the viewpoint of the religious audience of Aeschylus, were deemed a serious crime”; cf. ibidem, 15. Sand see Miles: “In Aeschylus’ Persians burnt temples are cited as significant factors that led to the defeat of Persia at Salamis, clear sacrilege that brings down severe punishment”, Miles 2014: 112.


90 Such an attitude is clear and fair enough if to visualize the magnitude of the destruction the Athenians saw upon their return to their home polis. The Persian invaders had razed the temples and statues to the ground. Cf. “After the victories at Salamis and Plataea, Herodotus does not tell us when exactly the Athenians returned to their lands and how they set about rebuilding their city, but we cannot underestimate the psychological effect this would have had on the entire population”, Meineck 2017: 53. But see: “...The exact historicity of such stories is often difficult to assess. […] However, I have argued that such stories of destruction cannot be taken at face value. The armies under Xerxes’ command had by the time of the Persian defeat at Plataea become associated with all kinds of atrocities. Ruined buildings, especially religious buildings, hold a powerful grip on the imagination cross-culturally”; “The idea that not all stories about Persian vandalism are necessarily historical, but reflect a Greek stereotype, is also recognised by Iranologists” (van Rookhuijzen 2018: 297, 298).

in the following way: “[The Persians]… are ready at any time to overturn States and to overturn and burn up friendly nations; and thus they both hate and are hated with a fierce and ruthless hatred” (Pl. Leg. 697d).

Sabine Müller speaks in her article about the first commemorative statues of Athenian citizens set up at the Agora, the archaic statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton destroyed by Xerxes’ troops during the Persian sack of Athens in 480 BC: “this is entirely Greek biased view. In addition, the constant commemoration of the Persian destruction in the Greek collective memory primarily served the construction of Greek and particularly Athenian identity and self-definition. The topics of burnt temples and damaged or stolen statues were useful reminders of Athenian opposition to the threat of tyranny as well as Athens’ role as protector of Greece against foreign enemies, especially the evil from the East. Hence, the Akropolis sack was effectively presented by the Greeks and continuously commemorated as a key event in their history… In consequence, the Persian destruction developed into a topos”.

In 8.50 Herodotus reports word brought by an Athenian that on his way to Greece Xerxes had burned down Thespiae and Plataea, and “the barbarian had already arrived in Attica and was ravaging and burning it (ήκειν τῶν βαρβάρων ἐς τὴν Ἀττικήν καὶ πᾶσαν αὐτήν πυρπολέσθαι)”. On another occasion the historian makes Themistocles condemn the unholy Persian King: “a man who esteems alike things sacred and things profane; who has cast down and burnt the very images of the gods themselves” (Hdt. 8.109). The same motif of Athens burned by the barbarians can be found in the Athenians’ refusal to make peace with the Persians: “We shall oppose the barbarians can be found in the areas neighbouring Attica); and also Miles in 479 BC Mardonius, when retreating from Attica, ordered to set fire to the accursed polis (ἐμπρήσας τὴν Ἀθήναν, ἐκ τῶν τειχῶν ἢ τῶν οἰκημάτων ἢ τῶν ἱρῶν, πάντα καταβαλὼν καὶ συγκόσιος, Hdt. 9.13).

The Persian wars had done that. Running parallel to this fire is an account in The Histories, at the beginning of Chapter 105 of Book 9, of the Hellenes, who after the victory won at the battle of Mycale, burned their ships and the fortification works.

97 E.g., Hdt. 8.33; 8.50 (the invaders sacked and burned down the towns in the areas neighbouring Attica); 8.53; 8.54; 8.55; 8.65; 8.109; 9.13; 9.65 (“[The Persians] put to the torch the temple [of Demeter in Eleusis]”). See Shear 1993: 383, 411, 413, 415-417, 418, 426-427 (archeological evidence and their interpretation); Ferrari 2002: 11-35; Rung 2009: 164, 166; Miles 2014: 113-120 (with numerous examples from Herodotus’ work and discussion of recent literature); Rung 2016: 168, 171, 173-174; Müller 2016: 173, 178 ff.; Meineck 2017: 52-53; Tuplin 2017: 48-49, n. 74 (but here with inaccurate references to passages from Herodotus’ The Histories); Waterfield 2018: 151.


100 See Funke 2007: 25-26, Anm. 18: “Inwieweit aber etwa neben der Zerstörung der Stadt Athen auch Attika von den persischen Plünderungen in Mitleidschaft gezogen wurde, ist nur schwer auszumachen. Man wird jedenfalls die bemerkenswerte Aussage Herodots (9,13,1) ernst zu nehmen haben, dass Mardonios das attische Land ausdrücklich nicht plündern und verheeren ließ, um die Athener doch noch zu einem Bündnis mit den Persern zu bewegen. Ob und in welchem Umfang dann beim eiligen Rückzug der persischen Truppen nach Boiotien neben der endgültigen Brandschatzung der Stadt Athen (Hdt. 9,13,2) doch noch auch Teile Attikas verwüstet wurden, bedarf das Nachweises im Einzelfall” (with literature on the devastation of Attica and the destruction of Athens by the Persians); and also Miles 2014: 118 ff., 123 ff.; Rung 2016: 171-172; Wiesehöfer 2017: 214-215, 217-218.

101 Hdt. 9.106: οἱ Ἑλληνες… τὰς νέας ἔνεσαν καὶ τὸ τέαρο ἀπέσηκαν… ἐμπρήσαντες δὲ τὸ τέαρο καὶ τὰς νέας ἀπέσηκαν.
After the battle at Mycale, a momentous event took place: instead of returning to Piraeus, the Athenian fleet headed to the north of Aegean Sea for the Hellespont. The Hellenes arrived in Abydus determined to destroy the bridges linking Europe to Asia. This is how Herodotus sees it (9.114), and he adds, “and on account of which especially they had come to the Hellespont (καὶ τοῦτον ὡκ ἠκόπτεν ἐς τὸν Ἑλλησποντὸν ἀπίκοντο)”102 (cf. Hdt. 9.106). Was it so in reality? The purpose of this march seemed to have been to establish control over this area to allow for an uninterrupted supply of grain103 from the Black Sea Region and of other goods needed badly by the Balkan Greeks, the Athenians, in particular.104 The historian frequently speaks about that, for example, in Hdt. 9.101: “both the islands and the Hellespont were placed before them as prizes of the contest [for the victory in this war]”105

Were the bridges then the principal target for the Greek army on the march north-westward Asia Minor? – Who knows? But I shall note once again that it is what “the Father of History” emphasizes, and here he definitely reports the word of his informer, rather, several informers, surely the Athenians who took part in the legendary expeditions to “seize the cables”. At the conclusion of his work, Herodotus again draws attention of the reader to this – as it seems to us now – principal nuance related to the dedication of τὰ ὁπλα τῶν γεφυρέων.

We can conclude from the text of The Histories (though the author does not point it out directly) that the Athenians were carrying the trophies of this war campaign from Asia Minor to the one’s fathers τὰ ἱπό. But in the early 470s BC, when the territory of Attica had been just recently liberated from the barbarian conquerors, the local temples had not been restored yet.106 Years would pass before the Greek sanctuaries and monuments had been reconstructed and decorated, but for “the Father of History” this inconsistency was of minor importance. For Herodotus, as an historian and narrator, of greater importance was to show that the seized cables of the Xerxes’ bridges had become the symbol of the end of the Great War. So the historian leaves without further elucidation the episode of the dedication of particular trophies to a certain “point of destination”.

VII. Xerxes’ bridges and the hybris

The song about a unique construction erected on Xerxes’ command was performed on the stage of the Athenian theatre.107

The Chorus of Elders

102 See the new commentaries to Book 9 of The Histories: Flower, Marincola 2002: 300, ad. loc. οὐκ ἠκόπτεν (Hdt. 9.114).


104 On the economic and political importance of the Hellespont and the Bosporus see several recent works: Rubel 2001: 39-51; Tiveros 2008 (based on vast archeological material and analysis of recent literature); Rubel 2009: 336-355; Surikov 2013b; Leveniotis 2017; Russell 2017: 53-90 (with a review of literature on the topic).

105 Cf. Hdt. 9.106 and 114. Herodotus speaks about the need for destroying Xerxes’ bridge earlier, in Book 8, when relating the events following the Greek victory at Salamis. In 480 BC after the enemy had fled from Hellas, the Athenians were ready to sail to the Hellespont even alone (if the other Greeks had refused to support them) to pursue the barbarian ships and destroy the bridge that linked Europe and Asia: Hdt. 8.108 and 109 (the author speaks aboutThemistocles’ intention, putting it in his mouth); Hdt. 8.110 (in Themistocles’ messenger’s speech to King Xerxes; Hdt. 8.111 (on the Hellenes resolving not to proceed further in pursuit of the barbarian fleet, allegedly on Themistocles’ advice). Thucydides reports that Themistocles had relied on the good will of the Persian King, for it was supposedly he who in 480 BC had stood in the way of breaking the bridge across the Hellespont (1.137.4), and the Athenian historian adds: “the achievement he (Themistocles – A. S.) unreasonably attributed to himself” (sic: without elucidating substance of the case).

106 Commentators M.A. Flower and J. Marincola, referring to Pausanias’ evidence, note that after the polis had been destroyed by the Persians, “Some temples (Athenian – Α. Σ.) may also have survived” (Flower, Marincola 2002: 123). In the first book of his work, the Greek explorer and mythographer only mentions in passing the Athenian “ancient temples” – to the Dioscuri (τὸ δὲ θεῶν τῶν Διοσκοῦρων ἄρχαν, 1.18.1) and to Dionysus (τοῦ Διόνυσοῦ δὲ ἄρχαν … τὸ θεῶν τοῦ θεᾶτον θεῶν, 1.20.3). But compare the archeologists’ opinion: “… The evidence from this shrine further supports the claims of Herodotus – and bolsters the archaeological evidence from the city – that the walls, the houses, and the temples of Athens were burned during the Persian sack (9.13.2)” (Best 2015: 104, with reference to earlier materials and conclusions by T.L. Shear, ibidem, 106, n. 27).

constituting the State Council of the Persian in Aeschylus’ tragedy are astonishment at how the proud King “had bound the sea with fetters” (Aesch. Pers. 65-72, 100-106, 126-132):

“The royal armament, dealing destruction to cities, hath ere now passed to the neighbouring land upon the adverse shore, having crossed the firth of Helle,108 daughter of Athamas, on a bridge of boats made fast by cables, by casting a stout-clamped roadway as a yoke upon the neck of the deep”.

[...]

“And they have learned to look upon the domain of the deep when the broad-wayed sea whiteneth to foam beneath the tempest’s blast, trusting in their finely wrought cables, and their devices to give passage to their host”.

[...]

“For all the men-at-arms, they that urge on steeds and they that march along the plain, have left the city and gone forth, like bees in a swarm, together with the chief captain of the host; and have crossed the spur, projected into the sea and common to either continent, by which both shores are bound by a yoke”.109

Aeschylus does not use the word γάφρα. While describing the passage constructed by the Persians, the poet uses different words; hic: λινοδέσμῳ (Aesch. Pers. 68-69). This verse has σχεδία (vv. 105-106) – ‘a pedestrian passage/crossing’; λαοπόρος (v. 105-106) – ‘a pedestrian passage, a passage for peoples’113; πορθμός (vv. 69; 722; 799) – ‘strait, channel’ (ad verbum: ‘place for passage/crossing’); δίσιμα (v. 71) – ‘path, crossing’ (about the same Hellespont bridge), etc.

Of interest is a poetic metaphor – a bridge(s) as ‘a yoke’115 – occurring in The Persians (vv. 71-72): “As a yoke upon // The neck of the deep”.116 The word ζυγὸν meaning ‘yoke, burden’ figuratively and concretely,117 here again indicates the bridge linking the two continents.118 In The Persians the recurrent image of “the yoke of slavery” can be also found in Herodotus’ work (7.87).119 The historian puts this literally ‘a place/means serving as a vehicle for people’, i.e., a ‘Bridge’; see Liddell, Scott 1996: 1029, s.v. λαοπόρος.

108 The Straits of Hella, i.e. the Hellespont.
110 Verses 69 in The Persians is the only occasion on which the playwright uses this word; cf. Wellauer 1831: 254, s.v. Σχεδία; Linwood 1843: 306, s.v. Σχεδία. See also van der Meer 2008.
111 The same as in Herodotus, who also mentions the cables made of flax by the Phoenicians: λεικόλαον – ‘white flax’ (cf. here above, ch. III).
112 This word occurs in different meanings in the tragedy The Persians 10 times; see Wellauer 1831: 187-188, s.v. Πόρος; Linwood 1843: 278, s.v. Πόρος.
113 The word λαοπόρος (in the pluralis) is found only in this place in Aeschylus’s text and means


122 Smyth 1922: 169 and 171.

123 Smyth 1922: 173.

124 This is the only occasion on which the word γέφυρα occurs in the texts of the extant plays by Aeschylus (Pers. 736); cf. Wellauer 1830: 111, s.v. Γέφυρα (‘pons’); Linwood 1843: 71, s.v. Γέφυρα (‘bridge’). For the word γέφυρα occurring in classical literature, I will make a reference to recent works: van der Meer 2008: 305-324; Dan 2015: 224-225, with literature.


device of Aeschylus into the mouth of the Persian King Xerxes, who had set his heart to conquer the “whole Europe” (πάσης τῆς Εὐρώπης) and to put it in fetters (δούλιον γιγάντ. 120.

On the wonderful construction to take peoples across the water (λαοπόροι μηχανι), the construction that Xerxes managed to “close the mighty Bosporous” with, the construction, as Aeschylus’ characters believe, could not have been erected without the help of a divine (τῆς δαίμονος) intervention that deprived the proud Persian king of reason. This is what Atossa says answering the questions asked by the Ghost of Darius (Aesch. Pers. 718-726):

Atossa. Impetuous Xerxes, unpeopling the whole surface of the continent.

Darius. Was it by land or sea that he made this mad emprise, the reckless man?

Atossa. By both. There was a twofold front of double armament.

Darius. But how was it that so vast a land force won a passage to the farther shore?

Atossa. By artful contrivances he yoked the firth of Helle so as to gain a passage.121

Darius. What! Did he succeed in closing the mighty Bosporus?

Atossa. Even so. Some one of the pow- ers divine, methinks, assisted him in his intent.

Darius. Alas! ’Twas some mighty power that came upon him so that he lost his sober judgment.

Atossa. Aye, since by the issue ’tis plain how great the ruin he has wrought.122

Telling the ghost of her deceased husband about the tragic defeat of his son and his flight from Hellas, the Queen says that Xerxes “Reached to his joy the bridge yoking the two continents”123 (Aesch. Pers. 736: ἐζεύξεν μολέλι γέφυραν γαίν δούλιον ζευκτηρίαν). Here Aeschylus again uses the word γέφυρα124 – “the bridge” which literally “join the two lands (worlds or continents)” (γέφυραν γαίν δούλιον ζευκτηρία). That is, Europe and Asia. Aeschylus regarded the bridge across the Hellespont (and this was to be clearly understood by his audience) as a symbol of enthrallment of Europe, its assimilation with Asia dominated by the Persians.125

In response to this, the Shadow of Darius condemns the hybris of his son,126 who had fettered the waters of the Thracian Bosporous chains, like a slave, and challenged Poseidon himself (Aesch. Pers. 744-751): “A son of mine it was who, in his ignorance, brought these things to pass through youthful recklessness; for he conceived the hope that he could by shackles, as if it were a slave, restrain the current of the sacred Hellespont, the Bosporus, a stream divine; set himself to fashion a roadway of a new order, and, by casting upon it hammer-wrought fet ters, made a spacious causeway for his mighty host. Mortal though he was, he thought in his folly that he would gain the mastery over all the gods, aye even...
over Poseidon. Must this not have been a distemper of the soul that possessed my son?".\(^\text{127}\)

The poet understands the defeat of Xerxes as a wrath sent by gods to himself and his people.\(^\text{128}\) This is evident not only from the quoted lines but from the exodus of the drama – in the scene of the lamenting the Chorus of Elders and the Persian King, who appears as miserable, humiliated man, dressed in rags.\(^\text{129}\) Shame had befallen Xerxes because he had trespassed upon the compass of the allowable and stepped beyond the borders of the Hellespont. The wretched Barbarian suffers from his ὕβρις.\(^\text{130}\)

In 1988 the English scholar S. D. Goldhill\(^\text{131}\) in his article on the ideological and political topicality of Aeschylus’ The Persians offered an opinion about the importance of the Chorus elucidating matters of fair (and more perfect) Athenian rule. The Chorus of Persian Elders, in answer to the questions asked by Queen Atossa (Aesch. Pers. 230-247) praises the absence of an autocratic king and the priority of the collective will;\(^\text{132}\) the Athenians are hoplites, which makes them powerful, the Athenian polis is rich, but the citizens of the country use this wealth as an agent to serve their safety and not as a luxury. Researchers see in this drama an important aspect of the Hellenes juxtaposing themselves to the barbarian Persians,\(^\text{133}\) and many regards it as the earliest extant evidence of polarization of the Greek and the barbarian worlds. As notes Edith Hall in Inventing the Barbarian, “Aeschylus’ Persæ, which celebrates the victories over Persia, is the earliest testimony to the absolute polarization in Greek thought of Hellene and barbarian, which had emerged at some point in response to the increasing threat posed to the Greek-speaking world by the immense Persian empire”,\(^\text{134}\) and L.P. Marinovich (where the author reiterates the opinion offered by E. Hall): “… This tragedy (Aeschylus’ The Persians – A. S.) is rightly deemed to be the earliest evidence of absolute polarization of Hellenism and Barbarism”\(^\text{135}\).

Now many researchers are apt to think that the ethnic and cultural dichotomy “the Greeks – the Non-Greeks” (“us and them”) emerged in Hellenes as a result of the Greek-Persian wars.\(^\text{136}\)

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\(^\text{127}\) Smyth 1922: 173 and 175.
\(^\text{128}\) Rung 2009: 155-156: “Aeschylos is not only explicit when formulating the idea of punishment but he also calls for retribution. The playwright’s work reveals the traces of the Greek, mainly, Athenian, ideology, according to which the Persians’ sacrilege in Greece calls for retribution…”; cf. Rung, Chiglintsev 2017: 707, 710. See also Fountoulakis 2017: 104: “The wealth, power, prosperity, ignorance, arrogance and recklessness of Xerxes and his men leads to the creation of a pattern of thought and action, in which olbos leads to ὕβρις and ὕβρις to aote, and eventually to nemesis and tisis. This pattern already occurs in Herodotus 8.56-99, but is more fully developed as a central pattern in Greek tragedy, and of course in the Persæ (by Aeschylus – A. S.)”. See Jouanna 1981: 3–15.


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\(^\text{132}\) Aesch. Pers. 242: “Of no man are they called the slaves or vassals” (Smyth 1922: 129); contrary to the Persians, who are slaves of their master.


\(^\text{134}\) Hall 1989: 57.

\(^\text{135}\) Marinovich 2006: 15. Cf. Rung 2005: 134; 2009: 116-117 (in both cases with reference to E. Hall’s opinion), 119, 126, 153 ff. For the review of researchers’ stances, see in the recent article: Rung, Chiglintsev 2017: 703, esp. notes 33-36. Also see my article speaking about the origin of the fundamental ethnic and cultural dichotomy the Hellenes – the Barbarians (Self versus Other): Simtysn 2015: 193-196; 2017c: 57-60. 

\(^\text{136}\) Here I shall confine myself to the very essential list of papers that, in my view, are most telling in the “Hellenes – Barbarians” opposition and in the topic of the making of ethnic identity of the Greeks; and here I realize how subjective and incomplete any selection on this subject can be, see Bacon 1961; Reverdin 1962 (the collection Grecs et barbares contains articles by
The dichotomy “the Hellenes – the Barbarians” had been finally formed in the Balkan Greece in the course (or as an outcome) of the intervention of foreigners into Europe, as a hubristic violation by the Persian of the boundaries of continents. For the first time ever, this idea had been translated into the Athenian tragedy bearing a “barbarian” name. One can admit that Aeschylus’ celebrated The Persians had a great impact on the making of the social opposition that later became tenable and traditional for the whole Antiquity. According to S.D. Goldhill, the tragedy Persians suggested a warning addressed to the contemporary fellow citizens to make them suppress the ὢμπρις that once had brought down the Persian King and his army.

The Persians, part of the tetralogy along with the extinct tragedies Phineus and Glaucus and the satyr play Prometheus the Fire-lighter, were staged at the Athenian theatre of Dionysus in 472 BC, eight years after the triumph at Salamis, seven years after the pan-Hellenic victory at Plataea and the banishment of occupants from Hellas. Why should this play become topical at the end of the 470s BC? Why the idea of the divine punishment of Xerxes for his ὢμπρις was hailed by the Athenian audience (we do know how powerful the effect on the audience was)? Was it so because following the formation of the Delian League (478 BC), in which Athens played the role of a “protagonist”, by the end of the 470s BC it had started to show the first traits of pretention to “great power” status, peculiar to the arrogant polis, and this tragedy could serve as a warning addressed by the playwright to his fellow citizens?

Aeschylus is a whole human lifespan older than Herodotus. When “the Father of History” was a boy (if to rely on the Ancient tradition, in 479 BC he was hardly over 5 years old), “the Father of Tragedy” had already distinguished himself as a hero in the Greek-Persian wars: he had likely fought in the decisive battles at Salamis and Plataea, and a decade earlier had taken part in the Battle of Marathon. The Athenian playwright belonged to “the mighty, daring tribe” of the victors. The Great tragic historical play created by the veteran of the wars against the Persians and presented to his veteran fellows in arms is not only (and not so much) an encomium for Salaminomachoi, glorification of the Greek arms and the Athenian state structure, a hymn to the liberty of the Greeks, but also (even to a higher degree) the tragedy of the haughty despot, Xerxes, as it was performed in The Persians and how the Athenian audience

140 On the performed and the reperformed The Persians in Athens and Sicily: Smith 2018: 12-13. On the reception of Aeschylus in Antiquity and the Byzantine era, see works in Brill’ Companion: Kennedy 2018, part 1 “Pre-Modern Receptions”, here, the works by D.G. Smith (in Sicily), D. Rosenbloom (Comedy), D. LaCourse Munteanu (Aristotle), S. Nervegna (in the Hellenistic Period), G.W.M. Harrison (in Rom) and C. Simelidis (in Byzantium).

141 The positions the researchers take (see works mentioned in nn. 132, 134 and 135) regarding political actualization of The Persians are different. For example, T. Harrison (2000) sees in this tragedy high appreciation of Athens’ belief in her Imperial project.

understood it, which could have taught a lesson to Athens, getting all too proud of itself. The Persians by Aeschylus may be interpreted as a prophetic admonition to his contemporaries and t posterity.

VIII. Land and Sea (1):
The straits as borders, their outrunning and punishment

What has been said in the previous chapters (III and VII) about Xerxes’ hybristic aspiration to subdue Europe by spanning the two continents with a bridge is by all means the Hellenic interpretation of the accomplishments of the Persian lord. First of all, undoubtedly, it is the evidence from the time of the Persian invasions in the Balkans and the victories won by the Hellenes: Aeschylyus and his audience and, several decades later, Herodotus and his audience/readers. The account of the act of Xerxes’ mastering of the Hellespont given in The Persians and Herodotus’ historical work reflected the Persian view that had been formed in the Attic culture after the Second Graeco-Persian War. Yet these and other performances (both at the theatre – in the ancient Greek tragedy, and at public recitals when Herodotus read his logoi) buttressed the ideologeme of presumptuousness and sacrilege of the Great King and contributed to the making of the myth of the otherness of the Barbarian. It was the European, that is, Hellas-minded, interpretation effective in the framework of the ethno-cultural dichotomy “us – them”, “friend – foe”, “the Hellenes – the aliens/ barbaroi”.144

The second attempt made by the Persians to conquer European Greece (Xerxes’ great campaign) was to bridge the Hellespont by putting a Persian yoke on the strait to link Asia with Europe. But hybris accounting for Xerxes’ act is a decidedly Greek invention.145 Recent research emphasizes the fact that the Persians in no way regarded the punishment of the waters of the Bosporus as an affront to the divinity, on the contrary, the Iranians themselves interpreted this act not as Xerxes’ hybris but as his desire to prevail over the evil demon who prevented the righteous King to conquer the world.147 Yet this issue

and “Several Greek myths or legends can be connected to this old Indo-European model. But it could not help Herodotus or his fellow citizens to understand the real sense of Xerxes’ behaviour as he scourged the Hellespont” (Briquel 2016: 58). Also see Ruberto 2011: 41: “Fondendo quanto sappiamo sulla religione mazdea e sulla ideologia regale achemenide, si può, quindi, presumere che ciò che al greco Erodoto parve effetto dell’ira di un barbaro, probabilmente fu il meditato atto di propaganda di un re”.


147 See, for example, the already mentioned article by A. Dan: “Courant du Nord, l’Hellespont pouvait inspirer l’idée d’un danger infernal aussi bien aux Grecs qu’aux Perses: mais là où les Grecs estimèrent nécessaire la soumission du royaume aux dieux suprêmes, pour étendre l’emprise du bien. Incompri par les Grecs, les Perses étaient coupables de ὑβρις à chaque fois qu’ils combattaient une mer hostile: avec la punition de l’Hellespont, la perçée de la montagne Athos par le découpage de la Chersonèse a fait de Xerxès un tyran qui courait à sa perte – la défaite maritime de Salamine” (Dan 2015: 223). And further: “le pont exceptionnel dressé par Xerxès correspondait à une dimension sacrée de la royauté iranienne: le Grand Roi pouvait sommer la nature et les hommes, grâce à sa légitimation divine, le ʃarənah-littéralement ‘la capacité à assurer l’abondance’. … Les différentes formes de victoire des rois iraniens sur les eaux symbolisaient donc une nouvelle récupération de la ‘glorie’ et de la reconnaissance d’Apam Napât, en tant qu’instrument de la souveraineté du bien. En d’autres termes, la nature même se soumettait au possesseur du ʃarənah, lui permettant d’accomplir des exploits surhumains – autant d’outages pour ceux qui les regardaient de l’extérieur, comme c’était le cas de bien de peuples en contact en Asie Mineure” (Dan 2015: 226, with references to the collaborative article by Briquel, Desnier (1983) and other articles by the same authors from the 1980s to the 2000s, which I have failed to find). “Ce que pour les Grecs
(surely of great interest, in terms of differences of interpretations of the same acts from different angles, those of the Greeks and the Persians) lies outside the topic of my immediate concern, which is to understand the symbolic value of τὰ δόξα τῶν γεφυρέων of the Persian War.

The issue of the demarcation of boundaries between Europe and Asia (physical, geopolitical, mental, and cultural) in the Ancient world (from the Archaic Greek era to the times of the Roman Empire) also constitutes a special topic, which I shall briefly outline. In the recent two decades, the topic of the history of Euro-Asian borders and of defining Europe has become especially urgent. The reconstruction of the Greek quest for the demarcation of the two continents has been dealt, for example, by V. Musbakhova; different versions of the eastern boundaries of Europe in the Ancient Age are considered in the works by J. Cobet, S. Fischerová, A.C. Rufino, and other scholars (not only antiquity researchers).

The dividing line between Europe and Asia has always been (and will remain) conventional, so in different historical periods – from the Antiquity to the end of the Modern Era – it had been perceived differently. The demarcation line had always “fluctuated” winding its way to expand eastward or to squeeze its territory westward. Sometimes geographers, historians, politologists and culturologists regard this very line separating Europe from Asia as “invisible”. That is, in other words, there is no such thing as a border here, for Europe is an idea. But throughout the history, the mental (invisible, yet significant) border dividing the two continents – the two worlds – had had a physical form, usually determined by the water divide between Europe and Asia.

It is not an overstatement to say that the literary tradition had linked the key moments in the Ancient history (and not only) to straits – the bridges of the world (“des charnières du monde”), as G. Tolias put it: “Dès l’Antiquité, les Colonnes d’Hercule, le système de l’Hellespont et du Bosphore de Thrace ainsi que le Bosphore Cimmérien (le détroit de Kertch), sont conçus comme des charnières du monde, délimitant les parties qui le composent, l’Afrique, l’Europe et l’Asie.” Among these “charnières du monde”, the Hellespont takes pride of place – the “stormy seas”, one of the most important boundaries; and it has always been regarded as such, even after the Antiquity up to the modern times. The Dardanelles (a new name of the Hellespont) and the Bosphorus are the fateful boundaries, the straits par excellence.

apparaissait comme colère, devait être, chez les Iraniens, une violence justifiée du Grand Roi devant les démons du mal, pour l’établissement d’un empire mis sous le signe d’Ahura Mazdā, avec l’aide de Mihr et d’Aqām Napāt” (Dan 2015: 227) and “Si les Grecs voient dans la destruction des premiers ponts (across the Hellespont – A. S.) l’accomplissement du rôle défensif que tout fleuve était censé accomplir pour sa communauté, les Perses l’interprètent comme un obstacle démoniaque qui ne peut résister au Grand Roi, chargé d’une mission sacrée” (Dan 2015: 228).

Musbakhova 2014: 75-92 (Hecataeus of Miletus).

Cobet 2008: 407-429; 2010: 37-57 (discussion and literature), also see other articles by Justus Cobet, cited in note 152.

Fischerová 2012: 161-171 (Hippocrates), with literature.


155 See, for example, Elena Rabinovich’s historical and cultural essay, which is entitled precisely “The Invisible Border”: Rabinovich 2007: 267-290.

154 Many works on this topic have been published in recent years; for example, I shall refer to an article by L. Bekemans 2012: 65-81 (with literature) and the above-mentioned article by A.C. Rufino “La fundamentación clásica de la idea de Europa” (Rufino 2014: 15-39).


156 Tolias 2017: 133.

157 Cf. Tolias 2017: 133: “… des Dardanelles et du Bosphore, Détroits par excellence, du fait de leur
Andrew Davison in his “Border Thinking on the Edges of the West” speaks about the role the Hellespont played in European culture. The author deliberates on borders and “border thinking” in different historical epochs. He demonstrates, resorting to different case studies, that a border-crossing act usually conceptualizes violence, which is interpreted as a violation of the established order by an entity that has transgressed a physical bordering line (a mythical hero, a people, a state, a ruler or an army). Davison examines references to various ways of crossing the border of the “Western” world: (the Alps, the Taurus mountain range et al.), rivers and straits. The first part of the book focuses on the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) separating “Europe” from “Asia”. Davison, “the inherited classics of the Western tradition constitute as one special liminal space between Europe and Asia – the small waterway known as the Hellespont (literally, Sea of Helle) where significant conflict between warring parties coming from both its shores has occurred and what the texts I examine produce as the division between worlds. ... The Hellespont was not only a key strategic passage in the history of human conflict; going from Sestos in the west or Abydos in the east also figures prominently in the mythopoetic imagination of Western civilization”.

The Hellespont is a telling example of a mental perception of a physical border between “civilized” and “barbarian” spaces. In her article on straits borders A. Dan notes: “L’Hellespont ne correspondait à aucune frontière au moment où il était traversé par Xerxès”; yet the researcher immediately specifies that it was the Hellespont that the European Greeks identified as the eastern border of their realm: “Cependant, il est présenté toujours par les Grecs comme limite symbolique majeure de Hellas, au même titre que le Halys ou le Strymon”.

The concept of the Hellespont as the “major symbolic bounds of Hellas” (in the East, as a water divide between Europe and Asia), as far as we can judge, had remained in force down to the Persian wars, and the “Herodotean Age”, and later. Both “the Father of History” and his audience in the 5th century would have entertained this idea.

Contemporary scholars of Antiquity have frequently discussed the topic of the sea as a barrier (an impediment, a boundary, even an enemy). Rivers, seas and straits as borders (of ‘our’ and ‘their’ worlds), as well as theirs overlapping (with inevitable implications for those transgressing them) were significant motifs in Ancient literature from the Archaic times, including classical historiography. The idea of the sea/river as a divider plays a significant role in the works of Herodotus (here “the Father of History” is congruent with the established tradition).

Antonis Tsakmakis and Charalambos Themistokleous in their article published in the collection “Thucydides between History and Literature” express their opinion about transgressing the borders and the ensuing tragic implications (with reference to the sources) as a topos in the Ancient historiographical tradition: transgression of geographic limits usually results in punishment: “a familiar motif in the historiographic tradition, namely the transgression of geographical limits, reference to which is usually connected to a disastrous outcome, especially in Herodotus”.

160 Davison 2014.
159 See the review of this book Tolay 2016: 547-548.
161 Davison 2014: 18.
Bruce Lincoln is of the same opinion: as to the construction of bridges linking Asia and Europe (in Hdt. 7.33-39), the scholar remarks that Xerxes’ attempt to cross the Hellespont was the acme of hyperbolic folly of the King and the main cause of the Persian disaster. \(^{166}\) Egidia Occhipinti in his book, the chapter called “The Sea as a Barrier”, provides a number of examples of crossing water barriers in The Histories. \(^{167}\) The researcher points out that such crossing always derive from unbridled impertinence (ὕβρις) of the aggressor: “The notion of the river as a limit as well as the topic of the crossing of rivers or branches of sea, such as the Hellespont, are significant motives in Herodotus’ narrative; here the idea of crossing of boundaries often hints at the ήβρις of an aggressor and is applied in particular to cases concerning Lydian and Persian territories”. \(^{168}\)

See also in The Tragedy in History by Fleming A.J. Nielsen: “In Herodotus, too, the Persians’ crossing of the Hellespont and the building of Xerxes’ bridge are the main events that constitute ἡμβρις (Hdt. 7.33-36; 7.54-57); Separate lands and continents should not be conjoined or in any other way allowed to mingle. The account of the Persian defeat ends symbolically with the sacrifice by the Greeks of the torn ropes that for a short and fateful time joined Europe and Asia (Hdt. 9.121) (italics mine – A. S.)”. \(^{169}\)

About myths and continents, landscape and omens, barriers and crimes see in Herodotus and the Topography of Xerxes’ Invasion by Jan Z. van Rookhuijzen: “Clearly, Xerxes was not welcomed by the same divine forces which he tried to appease. They gave Herodotus’ readership a religious answer to the question why Xerxes was to fail in his attempts to control Greece. Similarly, the grave of Helle, who was by her tragic death doomed to stay in Europe, was a reminder that the border between Europe and Asia was inviolable. Yet Xerxes ignored the advice that the landscape, and many omens, gave him: by constructing his Hellespont bridges, he connected two continents that should have remained separate”. \(^{170}\) And next: “Xerxes’ crossing of the natural boundary between Asia and Europe was an act of transgression. The fall of Sestos, which was remembered as a reversal of the typical siege story encountered most notably at the Acropolis of Athens, marked the end of Persian domination of Europe”. \(^{171}\)

Such is the conception of ‘crime and punishment’ that plays a principal role in the historical epopee by Herodotus. And this, as was shown above, is concordant with the idea expressed by Aeschylus in the historical play The Persians. \(^{172}\)

At the beginning of his narration about the Persian wars, Herodotus, deliberating about the origin of antagonism in the East and The West, sets the two continents, the two lands, in opposition, as diametrically opposed: “Ever since then we have regarded Greeks as our enemies. \(^{173}\) The Persians claim Asia for their own, and the foreign nations that dwell in it; Europe and the Greek race they hold to be separate from them” (Hdt. 1.4). \(^{174}\)

At the end of The Histories Herodotus repeats his assertion about the whole of Asia (ἡ Ἀσία πᾶσα) being submitted to the power of the Persians: “The Persians consider all Asia to be theirs and to belong to their reigning king” (Hdt. 9.116). The idea of opposing Asia to Europe, as notes Rung, “runs through the whole of Herodotus’ account”\(^{175}\). Likewise Aeschylus, “the Father of History” sees this war as Persian (Asia) aggression against Hellas (Europe)\(^{176}\) and the struggle of the Hellenes for liberating their native land from the barbarian conquerors.

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166 Lincoln 2011: 528, n. 12: “… [Herodotus] treats Xerxes’ attempt to bridge the Hellespont as the culminating act of his hyperbolic folly and the ultimate cause of the Persians’ disaster”; and in Lincoln 2014: 239, n. 13.

167 Occhipinti 2016: 120-130 (Chapter 6. 2); on seas and rivers as barriers in The Histories of Herodotus: ibidem, 120-123.

168 Occhipinti 2016: 120.


170 van Rookhuijzen 2018: 89.

171 van Rookhuijzen 2018: 289.

172 Cf. Miles 2014: 113: in of Aeschylus’ The Persians “The crossing of the natural boundary of the Hellespont (Pers. 749-751) and the deliberate sacrilege of burning temples are set in place as reasons for future reprisals. ... The ghost of Darius puts the responsibility squarely on religious violations by the Persians” (with literature in note 2).

173 The historian means the Trojan War (Hdt. 1.3 and 4), for which “the Greeks were greatly to blame; for they invaded Asia before the Persians attacked Europe”.


175 Rung 2009: 157 (with numerous examples from Herodotus, pp. 157-158). To this the historian remarks: “Yet it is ‘the Father of History’ who was the pioneer of reconsidering the historical mission of the Greeks to defend not only Hellas itself but also the whole of Europe”, Rung 2009: 158.

IX. Land and Sea (2):

γῆ καὶ θάλασσα in Artabanus’ advice and Herodotus’ epilogue

The theme of the land and the sea is recurrent in the work by Herodotus. Artabanus’ advice given to Xerxes at the Hellespont prior to the march to Hellas illustrates the idea of the sea as a barrier and an enemy. Artabanus warns the King that he has two horrible enemies, “and these two enemies are the land and the sea”. In the name of Artabanus, Herodotus expounds why γῆ καὶ θάλασσα are so very dangerous for the Persian haughty King: “If you gather more, those two things whereof I speak grow yet the more your enemies. These two are the land and the sea. […] this is how the land is your enemy: if so be that nothing stands in your way to hinder you, the land is the more your enemy the further you advance, with never true knowledge of what lies beyond” (Hdt. 7.49).

The King does not accept Artabanus’ warning about “the two enemies” (Hdt. 7.50), but “the Father of History” shows that Xerxes himself takes these elemental forces as supernatural.

Herodotus’ historical work ends with an account of the capture of Artayctes and his son and their cruel deaths (Hdt. 9.118-120 and 122) and the advice once given by Artembares, the grandfather of the very same unholy Artayctes, to the ruler Cyrus the Great (Hdt. 9.122). This “advice about the land” is as follows: “let us now remove out of the little and rugged land that we possess and take to ourselves one that is better. There be many such on our borders, and many further distant; if we take one of these we shall have more reasons for renown” (Hdt. 9.122).

The Persians refused the hybristic advice given by Artembares to conquer “better lands”, which would bring them greater glory, when Cyrus – this great conqueror, the founder of the great Persian power, the vanquisher of the Greek Ionia – gave a wise warning about the influence of geographical factors on the character of a people. The desire to acquire vast, better, neighbouring (much coveted) lands surely points to ὑβρις. Cyrus fears lest the Persians, if not restricted, should grow soft and lose their former might, that they “should cease to be rulers [of other peoples] and turn into slaves themselves” – this warning is a precept for the future, and, so to say, the (the author’s) warning received from the future.

The events of later decades orchestrated by Xerxes, grandson of Cyrus the Great, resulted in the tragedy for the Persian people, who dared, on the command of their king, to put a “yoke” on the Hellespont and conquer the whole of Europe. Declares the Persian King haughtily: “for no land that the sun beholds will lie on our borders, but I will make all to be one country, when I have passed over the whole of Europe (διὰ πᾶσας διεξελθον τῆς Εὐρώπης)” (Hdt. 7.87).

The liberation of the lands of Hellas from the barbarian yoke ends Herodotus’ work, when the Persians had been punished for transgressing the geographical borders of Europe and Asia, the boundaries had been restored and the cables from

177 Occhipinti 2016: 120–121, citing the passage Hdt. 7.49.
178 Hdt. 7.47: δύο τά μέγιστα πάντων ἕνα ταῦτα πολεμιώτατα; and Hdt. 7.49: τὰ δὲ δυό ταῦτα ἐστὶ γῆ τε και θάλασσα. Godley 1968: 363. The motif of land as an ally (ξύμμαχος) of the Hellenes, hence, the enemy of the barbarians, runs through Aeschylus’ The Persians: “For Earth herself fights with him in his fight” (ἀυτῇ γὰρ ἡ γῆ ξύμμαχος, Aesch. Pers. 792); see Deratani 1946: 16.
179 See, e.g., Hdt. 7.35. Also Pelling 1991: 136-140; Occhipinti 2016: 121, n. 16 (with reference to the cited work by C.B.R. Pelling): “Land and sea are read by Pelling as elemental forces, which Xerxes faces, something supernatural, or even magical”.
180 It is interesting to note that the historian mentions for the first time the execution of Artayctes by the Athenians before he gives an account of the successful construction of the bridge across the Hellespont (Hdt. 7.33). The repetition – bis! – of the execution of the satrap of Sestus seems significant (on his crimes: Hdt. 9.116): he was nailed living to a plank on “the tongue of land where the bridges of Xerxes had been fixed”, the bridge that linked the two continents (Hdt. 7.33 and 9.120). This repetitio draws a parallel between the preparation for the barbarian invasion of Hellas and their expulsion by the Greeks from Europe – the beginning and the end of the logos about the great march of the Persians.

181 See Rosen 2009 – on the issue of interpreting the final chapter of Herodotus’ The Histories (9.122).
182 Pelling 2016: 80: “The final chapter of the whole work captures Cyrus’ advice not to take over a luxurious land, though admittedly that is still because restraint (italics mine – A. S.) in that single case is a better path to becoming ‘rulers rather than slaves of others’, the very final words of all (9.122)”.
the bridges with which the enemies had tied the two continents were taken by the victorious Greeks on their ships.

Chapter 121 of Book 9 of The Histories is the last in Herodotus’ study of “great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners especially the reason why they warred against each other”. As Rung notes regarding Hdt. 9. 121, “a short historical digression (Hdt. 9.122–A. S.) following this passage about the advice which Artembares – grandfather of Artayctes, the commander of the Garrison at Sestus – allegedly gave to Cyrus the Great thereby urging the Persian King to start his conquest is a worthy end of the narration (Hdt. 9.122)”. It is clear the advice given by Artembares to Cyrus from the last episode, allegedly occurring in the days of yore, is a work of fiction done by the historian. In my opinion, the last (122) chapter of Herodotus’ work should be regarded as an epilogue. The final (and principal) dictum thereof serves as a warning about inevitable punishment of anyone – be it a man, ruler, state or people – for one’s unruly actions. And I agree with Rung that this warning epilogue is “a worthy end of the account” of the history of τὰ Μηδικά. X. Herodotus’ heroic epopee on the Greek-Persian wars as an allusion and/or the author’s admonition to his contemporaries?

The barbarians’ hubristic attempts to conquer the whole of Europe (interventions of 490 and 480/79 BC) fell flat, and there were no other marches to the continent of Hellas. The assertion about the end of Persian invasions of Europe after the Persians had been driven out in 479 BC is an evaluating view of the historian of Halicarnassus on the Greek-Persian wars (and highly likely, that of his contemporaries), the view that was formed decades after the triumphal return of the Athenians from the coasts of Asia Minor; this view stems from the 440s-430s BC, when the historian after his roaming the oecumene was working on his heroic epos of the war that had long became a legend. But this story about what sort of people “were those in our time” is addressed to his contemporaries.

The epilogue of The Histories (Hdt. 9.122) could have been addressed to the Athenians as a warning against the overbearing acts performed by the leaders of arche, aiming to spread their power in Hellas and willing to impose their will on the Greek poleis, members of the First Athenian League.

Or (which is not unlikely) as allusions made by the historian, which (according to his design) were to admonish the Hellenes – potential readers of/listeners to The Histories – against the danger created not only by Athenian but also Spartan imperialistic claims. Ph. A. Stadter advanced the hypothesis that “the Father of History” tried to warn his Greek fellow countrymen against a possible pan-Hellenic threat of ambitious Sparta. According to

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187 As Hdt. 1. Prooem. and see above, note 3 (with references to the literature).
188 Herodotus (9.122) with his last sentence points to the fact that “Thereat the Persians saw that Cyrus reasoned better than they, and they departed from before him, choosing rather to be rulers on a barren mountain side than slaves dwelling in tilled valleys”, Godley 1969:301.
189 Rung 2010: 17.
190 Cf., however, the opinion offered by a Russian researcher, T. A. Miller 1984: 21: “The account of the events ends (by Herodotus – A. S.) with the capture of Sestus by the Athenians in 478 BC (the Greek-Persian wars lasted till 449 BC), and the last chapter of The Histories is explanatory rather than concluding, which makes us regard Herodotus’ work as incomplete and aborted (italics mine – A. S.)”.
191 On classical historiographic understanding of the Greek-Persian wars and the approaches in the contemporary historiography to the periodization of the Greek-Persian wars, see an interesting article Rung 2010: 12-21, with literature, pp. 28-30.
193 Similar assumptions: Rosen 2009. Also I. Surikov: “Athens, for that matter, had followed the same path as the Persians before them: from victories, triumphs, and successes to trials, defeats and fall. Their lot demonstrated the ‘fundamental laws of history’, as seen by Herodotus, first and foremost, the law of divine retribution for ‘excessive’ might that engenders arrogant pride (διόπνευ) ... Could it be that Herodotus wished to warn the Athenians, so dear to his heart, against the Persian mistakes?” (Surikov 2010a: 362 = 2011: 278). The idea that the historian in the epilogue wished to warn the haughty Athenians he like so well seems reasonable; as to Surikov’s declaration that “the end of The Histories (i.e. epilogue in Hdt. 9.122 – A. S.) produces an unusual impression of a peculiar ‘end of the beginning’ (sic! – A. S.)”, this very impression the colleague has seems really peculiar.
194 Stadter 2012b: 1-14 (in what follows, references to pages of this book are made in the main text); cf. Stadter 1992: 781-809; 2013: 334-356. See other recent
the American scholar, “Herodotus wanted his hearers or readers not only to learn of the great deeds of the Persian wars, but to consider contemporary events in the light of the past. [...] Herodotus... wanted to suggest that Athens revealed indications of imperialism and had become in a sense the heir of the Persians in their domination of the Aegean. This analysis, however, leaves the impression that the Spartans escaped from this criticism. Instead, I hope to have brought to light the ambivalence which characterises the presentation of Sparta in the Histories. With all his great admiration for their courage and their indispensable role in saving Greece from the Persian attack, Herodotus shows another aspect of the Spartans, their imperialism and self-interest”. 195 “... Two episodes that Herodotus places at the centre of a network of events especially reveal to his contemporaries negative aspects of the Spartans and suggest a certain caution concerning Spartan propaganda”. 196

Stadter discusses Herodotus’ historical logoi, which, in his opinion, testify to Spartan “imperialism” and “Spartan Imperialists” – Cleomenes, Leonides et al. 197 We have to admit that Stadter’s arguments stand to reason. However, as the scholar believes, “Unfortunately, his (Herodotus – A. S.) words fell on deaf ears”. 198

The issue of the deliberate resolve displayed by “the Father of History” is a separate topic, which I am not going to dwell on. But if this interpretation is true, if Herodotus’ work contains various hints and allusions to the danger of “a civil war (στάσις ἐμφύλος) – that is, war among Greeks” for both (the Athenians and the Spartans), we have to admit that Herodotus’ allusions have proved to be margaritas ante porcos. R.V. Munson points it out: “[Herodotus] communicates to his fellow-Greeks a lesson about policies and behaviours they should (and presumably could) avoid. It is consistent with the characterization of many warning figures in the Histories that Herodotus was not heeded, as subsequent history shows...” 199 Similarly, Josef Wiesehöfer in his recent article remarks on Herodotus’ account of the atrocious, barbarously punishment the Athenians meted out to Artayctes and his son by in the finale of The Histories: “In Herodotus’ view, the Athenians, who were later to gain dominance in the Aegean Sea, thus seem to follow the tracks of the Persians with their despotic conduct”. 200

In the last quarter of the century, there has emerged in contemporary historiography a discernible trend in the study of Herodotus and his work. Namely that The Histories is, by and large, regarded as a work full of allusive warnings meant for Herodotus’ contemporary audience. The work by “the Father of History” came to be taken as a book about the past aimed at the future to warn the readers/listeners from the Pentecontaetia and the Peloponnesian wars against the growing “imperialism”, which would bring about (or had already brought about by the time Herodotus had completed his work) to great upheavals – ubiquitous staseis and the Pan-Hellenic war.

This way or another, but the immediate past history of Hellas, as is related by the “the Aoidos” of the heroic age Persian war, taught the proud-hearted Greeks nothing; the audience Herodotus (may have) appealed to would not hear his “prognostications”. Here I am willing to agree with Ph.A. Stadter, R.V. Munson and other adherents of the view that the ancient historian’s appeal to the warring sides to curb their ambitions was “a lone voice in the wilderness”. Yet, as was said, this is another matter requiring separate discussion.

XI. Conclusions

In this essay I wished to draw attention to the symbol specifically mentioned in the finale of The Histories. Herodotus tells that the Athenian heroes on their way back home had many dedicatory gifts with them, but he names only the cables of the Xerxes bridges. The historian – hardly likely that he went beyond the evidence supplied by the informers – specifies the ritual nature of these objects. That is so, what mattered was the symbolic meaning of the remains of τὰ ὀπλὰ τῶν γεφυρέων, not their practical use, for the Greeks on their way back to Athens, the Greeks who (at the time when they were interviewed by the historian) were the veterans of the Persian war. 201 Even more so this detail had


195 Stadter 2012b: 11.
196 Stadter 2012b: 3.
197 Stadter 2012b: 3-8.
198 Stadter 2012b: 12.
199 Munson 2013: 27 (here with reference to Ph.A. Stadter).
200 Wiesehöfer 2017: 218.
201 In the eyes of the Persians (and other peoples of the Orient, for whom Xerxes’ ritual gesture was meant), the Great King’s taming of the Bosporus also looked symbolic (specifically about this, see Briquel, Desnier 1983: 28-29; Dan 2015: 217, 222, 224 and 226;
a symbolic meaning for “the Aoidos” of *that war*, which thereby must have emphasized the final act of banishing the invaders from Europe and the restoration of the borders they had trampled.

Where were these unique trophies kept later: were they left in Athens to be dedicated to their gods years later after the restoration of the temples? Or were they taken to Delphi and dedicated to Apollo? – Herodotus does not specify. For the historian (and the audience he aimed at) these details seemed insignificant.

The epic historian selects the evidence gained from different sources according to his vision of the picture of the past, while arranging the war events according to the available information; he invents something as is typical of every artist, but invariably pursues the main course: crime and punishment of the Persian conquerors. The Persians’ hubristic desire to conquer Europe was punished by the gods, and this was translated into the Hellenes’ will to struggle for their land. It is not fortuitous that it is the account of the victorious *nostos* of the heroes of the past with the cables of the Xerxes’ bridges that Herodotus ends his work with. It is a hymn of the liberation of Hellas, and in the end the final choral of the war played by the Athenians.

It is this bombastic note – the tragic punishment of Xerxes and the glorification of the victory won by the Greeks over the intruding barbarians – that the historian, believing his task to be fulfilled, was to finish his work with. Decades earlier, his older contemporary, Aeschylus (*The Persians*), had interpreted the events in the same way. Presumably, in the middle and the second half of the 5th century BC, when Herodotus was working on *The Histories*, this was how the end of the great war was perceived by the contemporaries of “the Father of Tragedy” and “the Father of History”, and by the next generation – Thucydides and his contemporaries.

In view of the ambitions Herodotus articulated at the beginning of his work and of the composition of *The Histories*, such a finale seems to be speak of completeness and integrity of Herodotus’ text constituting a complete work with a prologue (Hdt. 1. Prooem.) and an epilogue (9.122).

Certain passages of *The Histories* (and, by design, in the epilogue) contain the author’s warning aimed at his contemporaries of the 440s–420s BC, when he was working on his epopee. By comparing

van Rookhuijzen 2018: 83-85 and notes 190, 192, 194), but, as I noted above with references to the literature, *sub specie Persarum*, it was symbolic in a totally different sense. See also Desnier 1995, in the Near East for the crossing of bounds/rivers as the symbolic action.

Meineck 2017: 53: “As for the destruction of the Acropolis shrines, we see no major rebuilding there for over 20 years, except the clearing of debris and the building of walls, until the erection of the large bronze statue of Athena Promachus in 458 BCE”. (Also see the above-mentioned literature.)

Thuc. 1.23.1: “The greatest achievement of former times was the Persian war, and yet this was quickly decided in two sea-fights and two land-battles”.

Smith 1956: 41. Thucydides must have believed that the Persian war ended in 479 BC. Cf. Flower, Marincola 2002: 310, ad loc. Hdt. 9.121.2: “Thucydides begins his digression on the development of Athenian power between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars… with the siege of Sestos, which suggests that he accepted Herodotus’ ending Herodotus, like Thucydides (1.23.1), considered the Persian Wars, strictly speaking, to have ended with Mycale”. The Athenian historian did not include the events of Pentecontaetia (1.89-117) in the period of τὰ Μηδικῶ/δ Μηδίκος πόλεμος (see Thuc. 1.89.2; cf. also Thuc. 1.18.3; 1.95.7 and 1.97.1). On Thucydides’ account of the Greek-Persian wars, see, for example, Bowie 1993; Rood 1998: 246-254; 1999 141-168; Wiesehöfer 2006: 657-667; Marincola 2007b; Rung 2010: 14-20, 28-29; Stadter 2012a: 40, 42-43, 45, 46 ff. et al.; Zali 2016: 34-58, esp. pp. 35-47.

See E. Irwin 2018: 282: “end the ‘Histories’ at the site that marks for some the symbolic divide between Asia and Europe, bridged by the hybris of Xerxes, and with the figure of Protesilaus, who as the first Greek of the Trojan War to step on Asian soil and first to die there recalls the proem’s allusion to that epic campaign (italics mine – A. S.).”.

Contemporary scholars still have doubts as to the time when Herodotus started writing the Histories and when he finished working on them. The work is generally believed to have been completed in the mid 420s; some scholars argue in favour of 414/3 BC; see Fornara 1971a: 25-34; 1971b: 57-64, 75-91; 1981: 149-156; also Raaflaub 1987: 221-248 (with earlier literature); contra Cobet 1977: 2-27; 1987: 508-511. For discussion, e.g., Jacoby 1913: 230-232; Todd 1922: 35-36; Pearson 1936: 33-35; Lattimore 1958: 9-21; Cobet 1971: 59-71; Evans 1979: 245-249; 1982: 15-18; Sansone 1985: 1-9; Evans 1987: 226-228; 1988; How, Wells 1991a: 51; Figueira 1993: 139-142 (and literature, p. 140, n. 61); Raaflaub 2002a: 36-37; 2002b: 152-153; Surikov 2011: 272-275, 278-279; Stadter 2012a: 42-43; 2012b: 2-3; Munson 2013: 11-13, 25-26; Raaflaub 2016: 595-596; Pelling 2016: 84; Oliver 2017: 2, 76-77; Harrison, Irwin 2018: 9. Yet Elizabeth Irwin in some of her recent works (e.g., Irwin 2013: 7-84; 2018: 279-334 and 2019) upholds a much later dating of the first *The Histories*. She argues that Herodotus’ work was created during the Peloponnesian wars, that the historian had lived through this war, knew about its outcome and till the end of the war
the Athenian polis to the Persian Power that once had plunged into pernicious arrogance only to take the consequences with a vengeance (which the historian had duly described), Herodotus aimed to identify the signs of hybris that had already come in full force; this warning against the Athenian hybris may have been aimed at all the Greeks. Or as a warning against the pan-Hellenic threat looming on the opposite side – from the stern bellicose Spartans? Striving to expand its clout, Sparta encouraged the Greeks to join their efforts to counter the Athenian growing imperial claims. The historian may have wished to warn against the danger coming from both hegemon poles whose contention finally affected the whole of Hellas and divided the Greek world into two parts – the pro-Athenian and the pro-Spartan.

Thus, if my assumptions regarding the symbolic meaning of the cables and bridges in the last chapter of The Histories (9.121) and the general speculation about the pathos of the historical and epic work of Herodotus are right, we can be more assured of the fulfilment of the Halicarnassian historian’s design and the completeness of his work on the Great war waged by the Hellenes against the Persians.

kept working on it. The researcher assumes that “there are strong grounds (sic! – A. S.) for believing Herodotus’ logos to have been written in response to Thucydides” (Irwin 2013: 9). But the thesis of “response” given by Herodotus to Thucydides seems to carry little credibility. E. Irwin finds relatable pieces in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides and holds that “These parallels, and others like them in the last logos (in Herodotus’ work — A. S.), cannot be coincidental” (Irwin 2018 and also Irwin 2019). The coincidences occurring in several passages in the first two Histories examined by Irwin seem (not without doubt) relatable, but the question still remains as to whether these “parallels” in Herodotus’ and Thucydides’ works, which Irwin traces, testify to the actual overlapping of their logoi and plots? The idea is of certain interest, someone may find it very tempting, but, in my view, the very idea begs the question. Critical remarks on E. Irwin’s hypothesis can be found in reviews of the collection edited by Dunsch, Ruffing 2013; Heubach 2014 (“Diese These, die die Autorin selbst als ‘kontroversial position’ (S. 9) beschreibt, kann jedoch im Folgenden leider nicht überzeugend belegt werden. … Doch scheint der Perspektivenumschlag und die Neuordnung der beiden klassischen Historiographen [Herodots und Thukydidès – A. S.] wenig plausibel”); Stronk 2015 (“[Irwin] adduces a considerable amount of evidence, ingenuity, and scholarship, but at the end she fails to completely convince me, though I admit her theory may be appealing to those who believe in multiple layers hidden in the Histories”); Haywood 2015: 190 (here is a more restrained response to “Irwin’s ambitious contribution”); also Pelling 2016: 84, n. 44; Rutherford 2018: 10-11 + n. 28. The issue of the dating of the first History also should be classed among the so-called “Herodotean questions”. Again, this is a topic for a separate study.

Abbreviations

AJA – American Journal of Archaeology, Boston.
AJPh – American Journal of Archaeology, Baltimore.
AMA – Antichnii mir i arkhеologiiia (Ancient World and Archaeology), Saratov.
AWE – Ancient West and East, Leiden and Boston.
BMCR – Bryn Mawr Classical Review.
C&M – Classica et Mediaevalia revue danoise de philologie et d’histoire, Aarhus and Copenhagen.
ClAnt – Classical Antiquity, Berkeley.
CPh – Classical Philology, Chicago.
CQ – Classical Quarterly, Oxford.
CW – Classical World, Baltimore.
GRBS – Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies, Durham.
RhM – Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Frankfurt am Main.
VDI – Vestnik drevnei istorii (Journal of Ancient History), Moscow.
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