Athens Journal of History

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024
URL: https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajhis
Email: journals@atiner.gr
e-ISSN: 2407-9677 DOI: 10.30958/ajhis

Front Pages

Athens Journal of History

Published by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER)

****

ATINER is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens"…is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is ATINER's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in ATINER's name.

****

The ***Athens Journal of History (AJHIS)*** is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of history. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the History Unit of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

The Athens Journal of History
ISSN NUMBER: 2407-9677 - DOI: 10.30958/ajhis
Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024
Download the entire issue (PDF)

Athens Journal of History
Editorial and Reviewers' Board

President's Message

All ATINER's publications including its e-journals are open access without any costs (submission, processing, publishing, open access paid by authors, open access paid by readers etc.) and is independent of presentations at any of the many small events (conferences, symposiums, forums, colloquiums, courses, roundtable discussions) organized by ATINER throughout the year and entail significant costs of participating. The intellectual property rights of the submitting papers remain with the author. Before you submit, please make sure your paper meets the basic academic standards, which includes proper English. Some articles will be selected from the numerous papers that have been presented at the various annual international academic conferences organized by the different divisions and units of the Athens Institute for Education and Research. The plethora of papers presented every year will enable the editorial board of each journal to select the best, and in so doing produce a top-quality academic journal. In addition to papers presented, ATINER will encourage the independent submission of papers to be evaluated for publication.

The current issue is the first of the tenth volume of the *Athens Journal of History (AJHIS), published by the History Unit of ATINER*.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER

Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

22nd Annual International Conference on History & Archaeology: From Ancient to Modern, 3-6 June 2024, Athens, Greece

The History Unit of ATINER, will hold its **22nd Annual International Conference on History & Archaeology: From Ancient to Modern 3-6 June 2024, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of History. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars and students of all areas of history, archaeology and other related disciplines. You may participate as a stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https:// www. atiner.gr/2024/FORM-HIS.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **13 February 2024**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **6 May 2024**

Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

- Dr. Steven Oberhelman, Professor of Classics, Holder of the George Sumey Jr Endowed Professorship of Liberal Arts, and Associate Dean, Texas A&M University, USA, USA, Vice President of International Programs, ATINER and Editor of the Athens Journal of History.
- Dr. Nicholas Pappas, Vice President of Academic Membership, ATINER & Professor of History, Sam Houston University, USA.
- Dr. David Philip Wick, Director, Arts and Humanities Division & Professor of History, Gordon College, USA.
- Dr. Jayoung Che, Head, History Unit, ATINER & Deputy Director of Research, Korean Academy of Greek Studies, South Korea.
- Dr. Tatiana Tsakiropoulou-Summers, Director, Athens Center for Classical & Byzantine Studies (ACCBS) & Associate Professor, The University of Alabama, USA.

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: https://www.atiner.gr/fees

Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

17th Annual International Conference on Literature
3-6 June 2024

The Literature Unit of ATINER is organizing its **16th Annual International Conference on Literature, 3-6 June 2024, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Philology. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of literature and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2024/FORM-LIT.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **13 February 2024**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **6 May 2024**

Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Stamos Metzidakis**, Head, Literature Research Unit, ATINER & Emeritus Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Washington University in Saint Louis, USA.

Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

More information can be found here: https://www.atiner.gr/social-program

Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€
Details can be found at: https://www.atiner.gr/fees

Athens Journal of History - Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024 – Pages 9-26

Kok Kosor and the Struggle for Cultural Survival, Human Rights, and Religious Freedom for the Montagnards of the Central Highlands

*By Joe P. Dunn**

Kok Ksor devoted his entire life to the struggle for human rights and religious freedom for the Montagnard people of the Central Highlands in Vietnam and Cambodia. The story of the dramatic history of these tribal peoples caught in the midst of war and its aftermath and the continuing oppression of a largely forgotten people is conveyed through the career of this extraordinary military warrior, activist, international human rights spokesman, and religious leader. Maligned by the government in power in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Kok Ksor is totally opposite of how the regime characterizes him.

Introduction

The conflict that the U.S. refers to as the Vietnam War was far more complex and broad. The Vietnam theatre was only one part of the multiple venues that included the long military struggles of the several ethnic and political constituencies in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. While the saga has been told in various degrees about the Lao, Hmong, various Cambodians, including the Khmer Rouge, and Thai elements, another constituency, virtually a war within the war in Vietnam itself, has received lesser treatment. The Central Highlanders of South Vietnam considered themselves autonomous from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), and the RVN deemed the Highlanders outliers from the Vietnamese people (*Kinh*). The two dozen ethnic groups and some thirty tribes that constituted the Degar peoples of the Highlands, popularly known as the Montagnards, allied themselves with the Americans early in United States involvement. Many of the tribesmen worked with U.S. forces in various military capacities, including CIDG and FULRO; others simply were caught in the middle of the warfare that devastated their villages and lives. The Montagnards suffered heavy costs, and the U.S. abandoned them when it departed. Nor did the war end for the Degar when the American involvement ceased. It continues today.

This story of the overlooked war and the ongoing persecution and cultural annihilation of the Highlanders is told through the vehicle of the life of the legendary, but little-known today, Montagnard warrior turned international human rights spokesman Kok Ksor. Kok was arguably the most ubiquitous of all the Montagnard military warriors, with a career extending in the field from 1961

*The Charles A. Dana Professor & Chair, Converse University, Department of History, USA.

when the fourteen-year old left his schooling to go with his uncle to fight in Cambodia until his death in January 2019, when he was a peace activist and international human rights spokesman. The former combat warrior decorated for bravery became a quiet man of humanity, humility, dignity, and non-violence. Kok's military exploits are dramatic but his peace work, much of it as the founder and voice of the Montagnard/Degar Foundation, Inc., may be even more impactful.

As the ethnographic bibliography in the footnote below indicates, the Montagnards include approximately two dozen ethnic minorities and some thirty tribes across several provinces in Vietnam known as the Central Highlands. The peoples have distinct origins, languages, linguistic backgrounds and cultures. Historically most followed thousand-year's old traditional patterns of agriculture, governance, and social life with little outside contact beyond their individual villages and communities. The French colonial regime lumped the different ingenious ethnic peoples of the region together as the Montagnards (mountain dwellers), and the Americans adopted the name. The people of the coastal and lowland areas of Vietnam are a mixed racial people who refer to themselves collectively as *Kinh* to establish a distinction between themselves and the tribal highlanders. Of the country's 54 officially-designated ethnic peoples, 87% of Vietnam's population today is considered *Kinh*.[1]

During America's involvement in the Indochina Wars, the collective Degar peoples constituted approximately a million inhabitants of the region. An estimated 200,000-220,000 died during the conflict, and the peoples have suffered grievously since. Small groups of refugees were brought to the United States in 1988, 1992, and 2002 and resettled in North Carolina. They were sponsored primarily by American Vietnam War veterans who had worked with the Montagnards during the war. Several Montagnard organizations emerged that focused on resettlement and integration into American society while maintaining Montagnard culture and religious identity.[2]

---

1. Gerald C. Hickey is the authoritative ethnographer of the region, author of four celebrated books: *Window on a War: An Anthropologist in the Vietnam Conflict* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2002); *Shattered World: Adaptation and Survival Among Vietnam Highland Peoples During the Vietnam War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); and *Free in the Forest: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, 1954-1976* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); *Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954*. See also Oscar Salemink, *The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: A Historical Contextualization, 1850-1990* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), and the original classic, Georges Condominas, *We Have Eaten the Forest: The Story of a Montagnard Village in the Central Highlands of Vietnam* (NY: Kodansha America, 1994), published in French in 1957; available in English in 1977.

2. See Thomas Pearson, *Missions and Conversions: Creating the Montagnard-Dega Refugee Community* (NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009); Cecily Cook, *Montagnard-Dega Community of North Carolina* (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1994; and Etsuko Kinefuchi, "Finding Home in Migration: Montagnard Refugees and Post-Migration Identity" *Journal*

The Montagnards' Struggle for Autonomy

When the French entered the area in the mid-nineteenth century, they made agreements with existing Montagnard tribal leaders allowing them local autonomy, but the French *colons* began economic exploitation of the region's resources. When they formally assumed authority over the Central Highlands in 1893, the French built roads and provided other "improvements" to support their investments in lumber and coffee and rubber plantations. Ho Chi Minh's declared Democratic Republic of Vietnam in September 1945 included the highlands. In 1946, the French colonial authorities created a special status for the highlands, the *Pays Montagnard du Sud-Indochinois*, separate from the Vietnamese Annam state in central Vietnam. Other than continued exploitation of its resources, the area received little attention. However, consistent with their practices in the other parts of their colonial domain, the French provided schools for a limited number of highlands people, who then became an elite that the French employed to serve them administratively.

The Franco-Vietnamese War, 1946-1954, in Montagnard territory affected the inhabitants lives. Although some Montagnards sided with Ho and the communists during and after the war, most preferred the French. Both the French and Ho promised autonomy, but religion played an important role in the Montagnards general commitment against the communists. Catholics had made inroads into the highlands in the 19th century, and had followers, but it was evangelical Protestants' focus on the region that gained greater Montagnard allegiance.

Problems for the highland minorities increased after the French departed. The new South Vietnamese government, first under Emperor Bao Dai and then the Republic of Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem, had visions for Montagnard territory. Bao Dai saw the highlands as a royal private preserve, called the Crown Dominion, where he loved to hunt and camp. He maintained good relations with the various tribal chiefs and he was open to their territorial autonomy.

Diem followed a policy that all others in the ensuing decades, especially the communists later, would pursue--cultural assimilation: to build a nation, minority cultures must be subordinated to a common nationalism and national development strategy. As early as 1956, Diem began to confiscate Montagnard lands and support lowland Vietnamese efforts "to develop" the region. When the Second Indochina War between North Vietnam and South Vietnam and its American allies ensued, the Montagnards were in the center of a major combat theater. The Ho Chi Minh Trail ran through Montagnard land, and throughout the war the North Vietnamese envisioned taking over the highlands and splitting South

---

of International and Intercultural Communication 3 #3 (2010): 228-248. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2010.487220; and Raleigh Bailey, compiler, *The Montagnards—Cultural Profile*, Center for New North Carolinians, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, undated. http://www.culturalorientation.net › file › Montagnards+CP.

Vietnam in two. The tribes could not escape the conflict. The ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*), whether in the North or the South, considered the indigenous peoples as inferiors, whom they referred to as *moi* (savages), and they had no qualms about exploiting them. From the earliest days, the communists drafted Montagnards as *corvee* slave labor porters, and South Vietnam's rapacious land exploitation was little better.[3]

In May 1958 a French-educated civil servant from the Rhade tribe, Y Bham Enuol (the Y in Rhade names loosely translates as "Mr.") and several other intellectuals established Bajaraka (from Bahnar, Jarai, Rhade, and Koho—the four main ethnic tribes), an organization that sought autonomy for the minorities in the Central Highlands. Bajaraka condemned the racial discrimination against the tribes and called for France, the United States, and the United Nations to intervene to secure independence for the minority peoples of the region. In August and September 1958, Bajaraka led demonstrations in Kontum, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuột that were quickly suppressed and the leaders were jailed.

Beginning in 1961, U.S. "Green Berets" Special Forces dispatched to Vietnam as advisers against the threat from the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, began working with the Montagnards in the Central Highlands. The Americans organized Montagnards into the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) and provided training and weapons to fight the communists. President Diem was quite concerned about arming the highlanders since he did not consider them part of the Vietnamese (*Kinh*) nation, and he foresaw longer term conflict with them. After the fall of Diem in November 1963, the new South Vietnamese leaders made overtures to the minority peoples. Released from jail, some Bajaraka leaders were given political positions. However, the sense that the highlanders were not really part of the Vietnamese nation remained strong on both sides throughout the war.[4]

---

3. On the role of the Trail, see John Prados, *The Blood Road: The Ho Chi Minh Tail and the Vietnam War* (NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1993), with particular attention to the early years, 1-42.

4. The many sources on the CIDG include the official government's *U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam 1961-1971: Official US Army History of the CIDG Militia in Vietnam* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, republished by Red and Black Publishers, 2013); Shelby L Stanton, *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975* (Novato, CA: Presido, 1985); D.W. Carr, *The Civilian Irregular Defense Group in Vietnam: Civil Defense Forces in Counterinsurgency* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2019). Personal accounts of U.S. Special Forces who worked with the Montagnard include Roger Donlon, *Outpost of Freedom* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1965); Jim Morris, *War Story* (NY: Dell, 1979); and Daniel Ford, *Cowboy: The Interpreter Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More Casualty of Our War in Vietnam* (Durham, NH: Warbird Books, 2018). The latter book is the story of Y Kdruin Mlo, a Rhade tribesman, who in fighting with the French earlier took the name Phillippe Drouin, and became one of the most famous/infamous Montagnards warriors with CIDG and FULRO.

The U.S. was instrumental in bringing together the Montagnards and other ethnic minorities into the Central Highlands Defense Force in 1964. But another ethnic alliance founded in Cambodia in the same year, *Front uni de lutte des races opprimées* (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races--known by the acronym in French, FULRO), would be more important. In September 1964 the so-called Montagnard Revolt against the South Vietnamese government and U.S. Special Forces at several camps elevated FULRO's prominence. The revolt stemmed from Vietnamese contempt for the Montagnard forces and FULRO's assertion that the Vietnamese were stealing Montagnard land. Dissident FULRO forces took hostages at one camp, Vietnamese Special Forces were killed, and Montagnard Strike Force members threatened to march on Ban Me Thuot. South Vietnamese premier General Nguyen Khanh blamed the Americans for arming the Montagnards in the first place. Several South Vietnamese generals openly expressed racist condescension toward the Montagnards as "children that needed to be managed." Negotiations finally brought an end to the revolt, but FULRO leader Y Bham Enuol and 2000 followers who had participated in the revolt moved to Cambodia and established a headquarters at Mondolkiri, which remained the center of the organization through the rest of the 1960s.

After South Vietnamese Generals Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu seized power in a coup in 1965, relations between FULRO and the Saigon government improved. Six highlanders were elected to the National Assembly and an ethnic Bahnar was named as a Cabinet officer responsible for the minorities. However, another FULRO rebellion erupted in December 1965 over the Vietnamese failure to fulfill agreements made in 1964. Thirty five Vietnamese were killed in one district. Enoul considered returning to Vietnam to lead the revolt, but did not. He did emphasize that Americans were not to be harmed. The government crushed the revolt, executed four leaders, and imprisoned fifteen others. In October 1966 some FULRO returned to Vietnam, and in December 1968 Enoul concluded an agreement with the Republic of Vietnam for others to repatriate. In January 1969, 1300 FULRO officers and families returned to Vietnam; however, Cambodian ruler Norodom Sihanouk retained Enoul under house arrest in Cambodia, where he remained until his death six years later at the hands of the Khmer Rouge.[5]

FULRO split into factions, some aligned with the U.S. and South Vietnam, others with the North Vietnamese. An estimated 40,000 Montagnards served with the United States military forces during the span of the war primarily as scouts, interpreters, and Mobile Strike Forces (MIKE) combatants under the CIDG and/or FULRO. Famed anthropologist authority Gerald C. Hickey estimated that 200,000-

5. The most complete story of FULRO is found in Hickey's two books, *Free in the Forest* (1982) and *Window on a War* (2002). Also see Hickey, *Shattered World* (1993) and Sidney Jones, Malcolm Smart, Joe Saunders, *Repression of Montagnards: Conflicts Over Land and Religion in Vietnam's Central Highlands.* Human Watch Report, April 23, 2002, 13-27.

220,000 Montagnards lost their lives during the war and the rest became refugees. He stated that by the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 approximately 85% of highlanders were forced from their villages which were destroyed or left in ruins. For at least three of the tribes—the Bru, Pacoh, and Katu—not one house remained.[6]

Conditions worsen even more for the Montagnards after the communist victory. Just as the Republic of Vietnam had done in earlier decades, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's goal of a unified national culture, under socialist development, provided the justification for abolishing "the inefficient practices and divisive nature of Montagnard cultures and placing these nomadic peoples in stable settlements." As Hickey characterized it, the Communists

> …brought to bear the same mix of Vietnamese ethnocentrism and chauvinism as the Saigon governments, but now they added the Marxist-Leninist perspective which depreciated the highland people as "primitive" (in the worst sense), their rites of passage as "backward." And their religious beliefs and practices as "superstitions". This lead to the worst oppression the surviving highlanders have ever experienced. It also has contributed to wanton destruction of the highland physical environment.[7]

Ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*) were sent into the highlands and the original inhabitants relocated to the valleys to grow rice and other crops for use in the rest of the country. Those identified with past involvement with U.S. forces were sent to re-education camps.

Some of the highlanders escaped to the forest and organized a guerilla movement against Hanoi. In Cambodia an uneasy alliance between FULRO and the Khmer Rouge against the Vietnamese emerged. The Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in 1979, drove the Khmer Rouge out of power in Phnom Penh, and established a puppet government in the country; but elements of the Khmer Rouge survived as guerillas in the countryside. They made common cause with FULRO, and some 7000 FULRO forces operating out of their base in Mondolkiri conducted military raids across the border against Vietnamese forces. However, in 1986 the Khmer Rouge cut off support to FULRO.

Some FULRO fled into the jungles and continued their fight, many perished, and a few ended up in refugee camps in Thailand. Through the intervention of a couple of former American Special Forces personnel, 212 FULRO members and their families were relocated from the refugee camps to the United States in 1988. A remnant of fighters continued to operate deep in the jungle in five small riverine villages in northeastern Cambodia where they survived under extreme deprivation and with no contact with the outside world. The UN Transitional Authority Cambodia (UNTAC) peacekeeping force discovered the group by chance and a journalist Nate Thayer made his way to the hidden camp in

6. Hickey, *Shattered World*, 261.

7. Ibid, 364.

September 1992 to report on them. When the insurgents asked about their leader Y Bham Enuol, they were informed that he had been executed 17 years earlier. The famed UN diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello traveled to the camp and negotiated the ending of hostilities, surrender of their remaining ancient weapons, and asylum for the 417 fighters and their families in the United States.[8] The connection with Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, home of the Special Forces, and Green Beret veterans who had worked with Montagnards in early years, determined the settlement of both of the last groups of the FULRO in North Carolina. Several Special Forces veterans continued to be sponsors for the refugees.[9]

Kok Ksor's Early Life

Ksor, a member of the Jarai tribe, was born in 1944 in Bon Broai village, Cheo Reo district, in the present-day Gia Lai province of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. He joined the Bajaraka movement in 1958 as a boy, and three years later in 1961, he left his studies as a secondary student in Ban Me Thuot to go with his uncle, Ksor Dun, a leading Bajaraka activist, to Cambodia. He joined FULRO in 1964 after the Montagnard Revolt. Dispatched as FULRO's representative in his native Cheo Reo-Pleiku region, Ksor survived Viet Cong attacks several times as he traveled to Vietnam to carry FULRO messages to Ban Me Thuot.

Earlier while still in school in Ban Me Thuot, Kok met a young girl, H'li Nie Hrah, the sister of the important Rhade Protestant minister Y Ham Nie Hrah. H'li was a highly intelligent and resourceful young woman who fell in love with Kok when she was still very young. When she turned 18, she determined to go to Cambodia to find him. With the help of numerous guides along the way, she and

8. See Samantha Power, *Chasing the Flame: One Man's Fight to Save the World* (NY: Penguin, 2008), 119-121. Vieira de Mello also negotiated with the Khmer Rouge and led other Cambodian refugees from camps in Thailand.

9. Nate Thayer and Leo Dobbs, "Tribal fighters head for refuge in U.S.A.," *Phnom Penh Post,* October 23, 1992. https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/tribal-fighters-head-refuge-usa; and Thayer, "Vietnam era renegade army discovered: Lighting the darkness: FULRO's jungle Christians," *Phnom Penh Post,* September 25, 1992. http://www.nate-thayer.com/vietnam-era-renegade-army-discovered-lighting-the-darkness-fulros-jungle-christians/ . Both accessed July 22, 2020. Former FULRO leader, Pierre K'Briuh, an ethnic Sre Catholic, who escaped from Vietnam after spending nine years in communist prison camps, was an intermediary in making contact with the last FULRO fighters in 1992. K'Briuh became a Catholic deacon in Greensboro, NC and headed the Montagnard Human Rights Organization. Y'Hin Nie, a leader of the last group of FULRO to leave Cambodia in 1992, became the pastor of the United Montagnard Christian Church in America in Greensboro, and head of the Montagnard Dega Association. See lengthy article on Hie, "A Space for Montagnards: A Cultural Refuge in Greensboro," no author cited, no date http://www.ibiblio.org/redefininghome/montagnards.

two other young women who had boyfriends in Cambodia set out on the perilous trip. Arriving on an elephant, H'li found Kok in a secret FULRO camp deep in the jungle in the northeastern part of the country. The couple married the next day and Kok left for his recruitment and training work in Vietnam.[10]

As a young man, Kok was one of FULRO's legendary warriors. Don Bendell's somewhat hyperbolized *Snake-Eater* recounts some of Kok's harrowing events. Moving back and forth between Cambodia and Vietnam, Kok served first as an interpreter and then in several combat roles at different times with American units, including the 4th Infantry Division in Pleiku and the Fifth Special Forces. He was wounded in battle, awarded the Purple Heart, and captured by the NVA in a firefight defending H'Li's village near Ban Me Thuot during Tet 68. Some of his comrades were executed immediately, but he was held as a POW for several months before surprisingly being released. No question exists that Kok was a brave warrior who saw his share of combat and danger. His Montagnard identity and his passionate Christianity drove him, and he believed that God's intervention saved his life many times.[11]

While continuing his primary function of recruitment and training for FULRO, Kok held several different non-combat jobs with the American forces. He worked for a time as a bartender in a Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) Club in Ban Me Thuot, performed maintenance work on military installations for defense contractor Pacific Architects and Engineers, and served as an interpreter for USAID.

The South Vietnamese considered FULRO and Ksor as threats and both the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese government sought to kill him, but in a couple of cases Americans protected him. After General Lon Nol's coup in Cambodia in 1970, Ksor and several other Montagnards received commissions in the Cambodian Army. Kok moved H'Li and their three sons at the time from

---

10. In his study of the development of a cross-tribal elite through marriages and other associations, Hickey outlines the beginnings of what would later become the fuller Degar identity. In Hickey's list of the 100 most important highlander leaders, 35 were Jarai and 34 were Rhade. The majority (55) of the one hundred leaders were listed as traditional followers of their ethnic group's religion. Only one was a Buddhist, and 44 were Christians (30 Catholics and 14 Protestant). Kok and his uncle Ksor Dun were the only two Protestants of the Jarai. Eight of the Rhade were Protestant. Hickey came to know most of the leading highlander figures. When he spoke about Montagnard leaders, he often mentioned Kok, with whom he had various contacts, as the prominent younger leader among the older peers. See Hickey, *Free in the Forest,* Appendix B, 304-307.

11. Don Bendell, *Snake-Eater* (Naples, FL: Speaking Volumes, 1994). Bendell, a prolific writer of nearly 30 Western adventure novels and Vietnam Special Forces accounts, draws on stories told by Ksor but wraps them in the writer's dramatization. In the Epilogue, Bendell claims that he served as the original adviser to the Montagnard Foundation and as is considered a family member with the Ksor's. The family does not affirm this claim.

Mondolkiri to Phnom Penh where along with other Montagnard officers they resided across from a military base. As he departed for continuing operations, Kok told H'Li that he would return for the family when he could. In the next years, Kok was in and out of Cambodia and Vietnam, and Lon Nol sent him for U.S. military training three times between 1971 and 1975. These included to the U.S. Intelligence Officers School in Okinawa, Japan, and Transportation Officer Training at Ft. Eustis, Virginia. In 1974 Y Bham Enoul appointed Kok as FULRO chief of staff.

Ksor and another Montagnard officer in the Cambodian army were in the U.S. when the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh in April 1975 and executed Enoul and other FULRO leaders. Other Montagnard officers took refuge in the French Embassy, but the French gave them up and they were never seen again. Through the services of the evangelical Christian humanitarian group World Vision, Ksor's family was extricated from Phnom Penh to Thailand before the evacuation of the city. The account is quite dramatic as the passports and visas to embark on the last flight out did not arrive before takeoff; however, when the plane had to circle back for a repair, the documents were delivered at the last minute and the Ksors made it on the flight.[12]

The family ultimately came to the United States under the care of a Baptist church in Charleston, South Carolina. United with Kok, the family lived in several places, including Charleston, Abilene, Kansas, and Newport News, Virginia before returning to Charleston for six years. Kok received a GED high school diploma and an associates' degree in electrical engineering technology from Trident Technical College in Charleston. In 1988 the daughter of the Ksor's original sponsor in Charleston brought the family to Spartanburg, South Carolina, where she and her husband lived, and the Ksors settled there permanently. The family joined the local Christian Missionary and Alliance church, a denomination with long ties to the Central Highlands, and Kok commuted every other week to Greensboro, NC to pastor a Montagnard congregation there. When the Spartanburg CMA congregation dissolved, the Ksors joined a local Baptist church and Kok continued to commute. Kok worked in the technology field for the international textile giant Milliken & Company and later for another engineering company until his retirement in 1998.[13]

When the first Montagnard refugees arrived in North Carolina in 1986, Ksor had been in the U.S. for more than a decade and he held U.S. citizenship. He was involved with the new refugee organizations but his priorities differed somewhat from their attention on resettlement and supporting Degar cultural identity in the

12. Hear Ksor's account of his family's escape from Phnom Penh on a lengthy video of a presentation at his church, undated. Found on website of Covenant Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC, https://www.covenantbaptistonline.org/kok-ksor/.

13. Brief Biography of Kok Ksor to 1993, Montagnard Foundation papers; and interviews with Ksor family, including Daniel, Jonathan, and H'Li Ksor, July 10, 2020.

United States. In 1990 Ksor founded the Degar Foundation, Inc., also known as the Montagnard Foundation, to focus primarily on the persecution of Montagnard culture and religion in Vietnam and Cambodia. It gained U.S. IRS Section 501 (c) tax exempt status in August 1992. All the subsequent Montagnard organizations were united in their identity and desire to maintain their culture, which was centered in their churches, but some division existed between the focus on communities in the U.S. vs. human rights violations and the persecution of Degar people in the Central Highlands.

As in many such situations, political agendas, clashes between strong personalities, and church politics surfaced. As Thomas Pearson's *Missions and Conversions: Creating the Montagnard-Dega Refugee Community* discusses the emergence of Dega identity, he views it as a conversion experience forged in the years of FULRO surviving in the jungle that spawned a common ethnic religious unity. The Dega Protestant Churches were the products and center of this identity, although various pastors established different followings. No real differences in theology existed as churches split over personalities and in some cases political ambitions. Pearson notes the conflict between Ksor and some other Montagnard pastors.[14] Montagnards also claim that communist agents worked to sow dissension among the groups. Ksor particularly was repeatedly targeted by the Vietnamese regime as a violent terrorist traitor trying to destroy the Vietnamese nation.[15]

Religious Persecution

Historically the Montagnards were animists. Catholic priests brought Catholicism into the highlands in the 1850s, and in the 1930s Protestant missionaries entered the area. Evangelical American Protestant missionaries, most prominently the Christian and Missionary Alliance, focused on the highlands area, where they translated the Bible into several Montagnard languages, and gained many converts. Even after the communists took over, closed Christian churches and schools, and imprisoned ethnic minority pastors, Christian radio programs broadcast from the Philippines continued to win converts. By the early 2000s, Protestants in Vietnam rose to an estimated 800,000 with the number in the Central Highlands as many as 400,000. Evangelical Christianity remains a central bond among the various ethnicities.[16]

---

14. Pearson, *Missions and Conversions*, particularly 85-91.

15. See http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/activities/some-facts-about-montagnard-foundation-and-its-founder.

16. The information for religious and other persecution of the Montagnards is drawn from Human Rights Watch reports, particularly Sidney Jones, Malcolm Smart, Joe Saunders, *Repression of Montagnards: Conflicts Over Land and Religion in Vietnam's Central Highlands.* Human Watch Report, April 23, 2002. ISBN 1-56432-272-6. https://www.hrw.

In February 2001, in response to a Montagnard peaceful demonstration against confiscation of their land and infringements on religious freedom, the Vietnamese government reacted brutally, beating the participants and arresting hundreds. During the next year, over 1500 Montagnards fled to Cambodia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) housed the refugees in two camps in Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri provinces. Throughout the year, continued Montagnard persecution caused hundreds more to flee. Cambodia did not want the refugee problem and with Vietnamese unrelenting pressure for repatriation, the country constantly returned desperate refugees to Vietnam. Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations documented the ongoing persecution of the Montagnards and the severe retaliations when they were forced back into Vietnam. In March 2002, Cambodia announced that it was closing down the camps and accepting no more refugees. UNHCR strived to gain refugee status for Montagnards in other countries.

Throughout the next two decades, incidents of persecution and exploitation of refugees by Vietnam and Cambodia continued unabated. Montagnard lands were given over to Vietnamese-run coffee plantations. Human Rights Watch extensively documented the incidents year by year. Montagnards periodically demonstrated to call attention to their plight, and Vietnam reacted brutally. Over 1000 individuals protested in Bon Me Thuot in April 2004, again suffering violent reaction from Vietnamese police. Vietnam cloaked their actions as a matter of national security against dangerous radicals attempting to undermine the state by harming national solidarity and public order. Kok Ksor was cited as a foreign instigator. Despite the fact that FULRO had ceased to exist more than a decade earlier, Vietnam continued to cite the organization. With armed struggle dead, Montagnards turned even more to religion. Pearson argues that what became known as Dega Protestantism was a direct outgrowth of FULRO's demise in the jungle.

Vietnam is signatory to United Nations and other international agreements on the protection of religious liberty. The Vietnamese Constitution declares full religious freedom or freedom from religious belief, but Article 70 includes this limitation: "No one can violate freedom of belief and of religion; nor can anyone misuse beliefs and religions to contravene the law and state policies." This provides justification for the nation's restriction that "all religious groups register with the government and operate under government-approved religious organizations." Unapproved religious groups or restricted independent congregations included Mennonites, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao Buddhists, Khmer Theravada Buddhists, and United Buddhists of Vietnam. But two new religious expressions that emerged in

---

org/reports/2002/vietnam; and *Montagnard Christians in Vietnam: A Case Study in Religious Repression*. Human Rights Watch Report, *March 2011*. ISBN 1-56432-755-8. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/03/30/Montagnard-christians-vietnam/case-study-religious-repression.

2000 became prime targets. The Catholic sect known as "Ha Mon" was founded in Kontum in 1999 and practiced primarily in three provinces; it had an estimated 2500 followers by 2010. The government held public ceremonies to force confessions of criminal intent and demanded signed pledges to abandon the "false religion."[17]

But the government's chief culprit was "Dega Protestantism." Although evangelical Christianity had been deeply established in the highlands for a half century, it surged in 2000 in a host of independent house churches of various kinds. Vietnam decreed that the so-called collective "Dega Protestantism" was "a false religion," a guise for a political Montagnard independence movement against public order. Vietnam argued that national security demanded that it be crushed. The government pressured highland Christians to join the state-certified Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam (SECV). However, Montagnards recognized that the SECV was a sham tool of the communists' subversion. Vietnamese police and military units were dispatched at various times to break up house churches and to prevent Montagnards from fleeing to Cambodia. The government brought charges in provincial courts against individuals simply for being identified with Dega Protestantism. Forced confessions, public "constructive criticism," and re-education followed. The clear message was to have no involvement with Dega Protestantism.

In the United States, the former FULRO soldier Kok Ksor, who had fought and nearly died many times for the Montagnard cause, employed several international venues to call for full religious freedom and non-violent protest. In 2000, while attending the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Peoples in New York City, he met Marco Perduca and Matteo Mecacci of the Global Committee for the Rule of Law, members of a loose federation known informally as the Transnational Radical Party (TRP). The TRP added human rights in the Central Highlands to its agenda and Ksor spoke at its international conference in Tirana, Albania, in 2002.[18]

Ksor also began a long friendship with Cambodian fellow human rights activist Sam Rainsy. Rainsy's father Sam Sary had been deputy prime minister under Norodom Sihanouk and Rainsy had served in parliament and briefly as Minister of Finance in the mid-1990s. Cambodian dictator Hun Sen banished Rainsy from the country and he was convicted *in absentia* of false crimes. Allowed to return in 2013, the popular politician won a seat in parliament and hoped to form an opposition government. Rainsy and Ksor promulgated an agreement in 2013 that in a future government headed by Rainsy's Cambodian Nonviolent Radical Party, under the UN Charter Montagnard refugees would be protected in

17. Ibid.

18. See interview with Emma Bonino, head of the TRP, http://www.emmabonino.it/press/about_emma_bonino/860.

Cambodia. However, Rainsy was accused of planning to give away Cambodian territory to the Montagnards and again exiled from parliament and the country.[19]

In February 2014 Ksor met in Brussels with Marco Pannella, a member of the European Parliament for thirty years and head of the TRP. The TRP was fragmenting and with Pannella's death in 2016, it dissolved. Ksor strived to keep the party's principles alive. In December 2017 he hosted European-based human rights activist Laura Harth in Spartanburg to visit the Degar community and to attempt to re-launch the TRP. The effort was unsuccessful, but an international human rights NGO with UN Consultant status remains as heir of the TRP. Dying of cancer in the last weeks of his life, Ksor continued to foster human rights alliances. He postponed his treatments to travel to Charlotte, NC in November 2018 to participate with Sam Rainey in a joint meeting of the Cambodian and Montagnard communities and reaffirm the earlier 2013 agreement.[20]

Throughout his work, Vietnam propaganda attacked Ksor as an insurrectionist and attempted to get Montagnards to repudiate him. The regime tortured his half-brother to gain a renunciation of him and forced five relatives to denounce him at self-criticism rallies. For more than a decade, his mother, Ksor H'Ble, whom Kok last saw in the mid-1960s, was periodically harassed and physically assaulted to get her to condemn her son. In February 2001 she was forced to attend a staged television broadcast where Vietnamese security forces demanded that she denounced her son. When she remained silent, she was beaten and three ribs broken. A committed Christian, H'Ble was arrested again at a prayer vigil, shocked by an electrical stun gun, and kicked repeatedly. She suffered medical problems from this incident until she died. In October 2010 she was detained and ordered to read a statement that called her son a traitor whom the Montagnards should not follow. Instead, she responded, "I don't know what my son Kok Ksor is doing. How can I tell people not to follow him? If you know that he is doing, why can't you tell the people yourself? Besides I am an old woman and who would listen to me?" Ms. Ksor H'Ble died, at age 80, on August 18, 2011. Between the day of her death and her funeral three days later, 16,000 Degar Christians from 37 nearby villages traveled to Bon Broai village to pay respects. The Vietnamese posted 2500 soldiers and security police to prevent people from other provinces from traveling to the village.[21]

---

19. See Rainsy's copious website, https://rainsysam.com; Sam Rainsy, *We Didn't Start the Fire: My Struggle for Democracy in Cambodia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2013; and his more recent "China Has Designs on Democracy in Southeast Asia: A Base in Cambodia Is Only the Beginning," *Foreign Affairs* (June 10, 2020), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/ 2020-06-10/china-has-designs-democracy-southeast-asia.

20. See Matteo Angioli, "In Memory of Kok Ksor," http://globalcommitteefortherule oflaw.org/ in-memory-of-kok-ksor/.

21. Accounts cited on the independent human rights organization, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization website: "Montagnards: Relatives of Kok Ksor forced to confess 'wrongdoings' in Vietnam," http://www.unpo.org/article/733, June 3, 2004; and

Nothing could be farther from the truth than Vietnam's charges against Ksor. He readily admitted to his contacts in the country and to encouraging protest and prayer vigils, but, as he expressed constantly, his understanding of Christianity demanded non-violence. On May 11, 2007, he spoke in Washington, DC, at the Commemoration of Vietnam Human Rights Day, sponsored by Vietnamese human rights activists. He emphasized that the Degar people did not hate the Vietnamese nor were they unwilling to live with them. The Degar people simply wanted human rights in their ancestral homelands. The Montagnard people and Degar churches did not wish to establish an independent state. "We reiterate that even if we so desired such, it is impossible for a population of less than a million and without armed forces to overthrow a government with a population of over 80 million who has also hundreds of thousands of fully armed soldiers at its command." Ksor echoed his Christian message that "God created all human beings and if God loves us then God loves all humans that thus this planet is for all people to enjoy."

By invitation of TRP colleague and Italian parliament member Matteo Mecacci, Ksor had spoken to the parliament's Human Rights Committee in Rome on November 19, 2009, where he reiterated the same themes. He cited that groups such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, US International Commission for Religious Freedom, and others had acknowledged the violations against the Degar people. He noted that Vietnam's destruction of highland forests and replacement with state run coffee plantations destroyed a way of life. He accused the Vietnamese of "ethnic cleansing or a form of creeping genocide," including forced sterilization of Montagnard women. He prayed that "the Almighty God will create a compassionate heart in each and every one of the world leaders so that they will have compassion toward our people."[22]

On February 20, 2012, Ksor made a statement to the UN Commission on Human Rights "Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," citing continuing atrocities, including murders of Degar people, and confiscation of land transferred to ethnic Vietnamese. He reiterated a common theme that the Degar were not opposed to living among the Vietnamese people on Degar ancestral land, but that the violations of human rights of the Degar needed to cease. Ksor's moderation was reflected in his deeply-held conviction that the soul of Vietnam itself was at stake: "The Vietnamese government and people need to change their attitude toward our people in order to live together in peace and prosper as one nation." He reaffirmed that "We build our churches not to work against the government but to learn how we can transform ourselves to be a

---

"Degar-Montagnards: A Mother's Silent Pain," September 11, 2011," http://www.unpo.Org/article/13190. Nadia Hussein, http:// www.restlessbeings.org/human-rights/the-persecution-of-the-degar-people is no longer accessible.

22. Degar Foundation Addresses the Italian Parliament, http://www.degar.org website.

better human being according to the teaching of the Bible and to keep our mother tongue alive and most of all to have hope for future life." He also linked the Montagnards' plight in the Central Highlands with other indigenous peoples such as Khmer Kampuchea-Krom people in the Mekong Delta and the Tai Dam people in Dien Bien.[23]

Oscar Salemink's careful study, *The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders,* confirmed Ksor's recurring charges of cultural genocide. In a sharp satirical critique, he reflected that in the socialist idea of developing an advanced society, not all elements of culture are deemed worthy of retention. "Outmoded habits" and "obsolete and backward practices" should be eliminated. Bad habits included religious practices, unhygienic or wasteful rituals, non-scientific taboos, etc. Party leaders must ensure that folkways conformed to socialist ideals. To maintain a façade preservation of highland culture in museums and displays largely for the tourist industry, selective artifacts are displayed, professional dancers and singers replace native performers for audiences, *Kinh* craftsmen and peddlers produce handicraft and trinkets presenting Montagnard life, and inconvenient song lyrics are changed to *Kinh* expectations. Vernacular languages are subordinated to Vietnamese—indeed only languages of communities over 500,000 are allowed to be taught.[24]

Conclusion

Until his death the quiet-spoken Ksor continued to reach out to political figures, the U.S. State Department, and the world community with his message. He often asked the rhetorical question: why the U.S. ignored the treatment of the Montagnards, a people who had been their ally and who had fought and died with them? He pointed out the U.S. continued to overlook or discount that the toxic herbicide Agent Orange used in the highlands still damaged his people.[25] He asked how could the U.S. scramble to engage in economic, business, social, cultural, and military agreements with Vietnam and totally disregard that nation's violations of UN and other human rights agreements? He pointed out that the Montagnards were simply another case of collateral damage.[26]

But Ksor was not bitter; his focus was always on his faith. In his pastoral role, he traveled constantly to Montagnard churches in North Carolina, and he continued to tap into the extraordinary evangelist commitment of the Montagnard

23. Statement to CERD 80th Session, http://www.degar.org website.

24. Salemink, The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders, 276-279.

25. Hickey's report, "Perceived Effects of Herbicides Used in the Highlands," Appendix C, *Free in the Forests*, 308-319, and fuller discussion, Hickey, *Window on a War*, 336-346, 355.

26. https://www.covenantbaptistonline.org/kok-ksor/.

community to raise money for their people in Vietnam and Cambodia, including founding at least thirteen new churches in villages in Cambodia. Ksor never wavered from preaching that ultimately what was important was to love one's fellow man and to seek God's guidance. Hate was not of God and violence could never be the answer. He asked for his people to pray that God would change the hearts of the oppressors and open the minds and hearts of people around the globe to the plight of indigenous peoples. But ultimate freedom was assured in God's heavenly kingdom.[27]

In his private life, Kok was a devoted family man who loved his children and grandchildren. When his website still existed, it displayed numerous pictures of all his family, an exceptionally accomplished group with advanced education and significant career positions. Two of his sons worked as ITT specialists and two were physicians in a joint medical practice. One daughter-in-law with a Ph.D. served as a school counselor. The grandchildren follow in the same talented vein.

Although Kok's family remains active in the Degar religious community, his leadership in the global Montagnard community is almost impossible to replace. He was an iconic figure instrumental in virtually every aspect of the Montagnard cause throughout his entire life. The few remaining FULRO personalities today are aged and dying off. Although the family attempted to maintain the Montagnard Foundation, Inc., it is largely moribund and has been supplanted by other Montagnard organizations with less international and political orientations. The large question exists how much of the fervor for the culture, people, and causes can be sustained by the second and the third generation further removed from the realities on the ground in Vietnam and Cambodia and subject to increasing assimilation in America. Although little known outside limited circles, Kok Ksor's life and mission will remain significant in the quest for human rights for a largely ignored, oppressed people.

Bibliography

"A Space for Montagnards: A Cultural Refuge in Greensboro." http://www.ibiblio.org/redefininghome/montagnards. Referenced July 2020.

Angioli, M. "In Memory of Kok Ksor." 2019. http://globalcommitteefortheruleoflaw.org/in-memory-of-kok-ksor/.

Bailey, R. *The Montagnards—Cultural Profile*, Center for New North Carolinians, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Undated. http://www.culturalorie ntation.net › file › Montagnards+CP.

Bendell, D. *Snake-Eater.* Naples, FL: Speaking Volumes, 1994.

Bonino, E. 2002. http://www.emmabonino.it/press/about_emma_bonino/860.

Carr, D. *The Civilian Irregular Defense Group in Vietnam: Civil Defense Forces in Counterinsurgency*. Master's Thesis. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2019.

27. Ibid.

Center for Military History. *U.S. Army Special Forces in Vietnam 1961-1971: Official US Army History of the CIDG Militia in Vietnam.* 2013.

Condominas, G. *We Have Eaten the Forest: The Story of a Montagnard Village in the Central Highlands of Vietnam*. NY: Kodansha America, 1994.

Cook, C. *Montagnard-Dega Community of North Carolina.* M.A. Thesis. University of North Carolina, 1994.

Degar Foundation Website. "Commemoration of Vietnam Human Rights Day." 2007.

____. "Degar Foundation Addresses the Italian Parliament." 2009. http://www.degar.org.

____. "Statement to CERD 80th Session." 2012. http://www.de gar.org.

Donlon, R. *Outpost of Freedom.* NY: McGraw-Hill, 1965.

Ford, D. *Cowboy: The Interpreter Who Became a Soldier, a Warlord, and One More Casualty of Our War in Vietnam*. Durham, NH: Warbird Books, 2018.

Hickey, G. *Free in the Forest: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, 1954-1976.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Hickey, G. *Shattered World: Adaptation and Survival Among Vietnam Highland Peoples During the Vietnam War.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

____. *Window on a War: An Anthropologist in the Vietnam Conflict*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2002.

Hussein, N. 2020. http://www.restlessbeings.org/human-rights/the-persecution-of-the-degar-people. Referenced July 2020. No longer posted.

Jones, S., M. Smart, and J. Saunders. *Repression of Montagnards: Conflicts Over Land and Religion in Vietnam's Central Highlands.* Human Watch Report: 13-27. 2002. https:// www.hrw.org/reports/2002/vietnam.

____. *Montagnard Christians in Vietnam: A Case Study in Religious Repression*. Human Rights Watch Report. 2011. https://www. hrw.org/report/2011/03/30/Montagnard-christians-vietnam/case-study-religious-repression.

Kinefuchi, E. "Finding Home in Migration: Montagnard Refugees and Post-Migration Identity." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 3, no. 3 (2010): 228-248.

Ksor family interview with H'Li (wife), Daniel and Jonathan (sons) 10 July 2020 and Montagnard Foundation papers, "Brief Biography of Kok Ksor to 1993".

Ksor, K. "Lengthy video on family's escape from Phnom Penh." Covenant Baptist Church, Spartanburg, SC Website. Undated. https://www.covenantbaptistonline. org/kok-ksor/. Referenced July 2020.

Morris, J. *War Story.* NY: Dell, 1979.

Pearson, T. *Missions and Conversions: Creating the Montagnard-Dega Refugee Community.* NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009.

Power, S. *Chasing the Flame: One Man's Fight to Save the World.* NY: Penguin, 2008.

Prados, J. *The Blood Road: The Ho Chi Minh Tail and the Vietnam War.* NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1993.

Rainsy, S. Website. https://rainsysam.com.

____. *We Didn't Start the Fire: My Struggle for Democracy in Cambodia*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2013.

____. "China Has Designs on Democracy in Southeast Asia: A Base in Cambodia Is Only the Beginning." *Foreign Affairs* (10 June). 2020. https://www.fore ignaffairs.com/arti cles/china/2020-06-10/china-has-designs-democracy-southeast-asia.

Salemink, O. *The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: A Historical Contextualization, 1850-1990.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013.

Stanton, S. *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975.* Novato, CA, 1985.

Thayer, N. "Vietnam era renegade army discovered: Lighting the darkness: FULRO's jungle Christians." *Phnom Penh Post,* September 25. http://www.nate-thayer. com/vietnam-era-renegade-army-discovered-lighting-the-darkness-fulros-jungle-christians. Referenced 22 July 2020.

Thayer, N. and Dobbs, L. "Tribal fighters head for refuge in U.S.A." *Phnom Penh Post,* 23 October. 1992. https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/tribal-fighters-head-refuge-usa. Referenced 22 July 2020.

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. "Montagnards: Relatives of Kok Ksor forced to confess 'wrongdoings' in Vietnam." 2004. http://www.unpo. org/article/733, 3 June.

____. "Degar-Montagnards: A Mother's Silent Pain." 2011. http://www.unpo.org/article/13190. 11September.

Vietnam Embassy. Undated. http://vietnamembassy-usa.org/activities/some-facts-about - montagnard-foundation-and-its-founder.

Athens Journal of History - Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024 – Pages 27-40

1668: An *Annus Horribilis* for the Spanish Monarchy – The Lost European Hegemony, the International Situation, the Internal Crisis[1]

By Rafaella Pilo[*]

1668 seems to be a kind of annus horribilis for the Spanish Monarchy that had been able to lead European politics during an entire century. If it possible to consider the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis of 1559 - that ended with French-Spanish conflict in Italy - such as the apical moment for Habsburg power in Europe, in some way the peace of the Pyrenees, signed in 1659 between the same protagonists, can represent the final phase of such as hegemony ruled by Madrid. Indeed, 1668 represents the most crucial point of crisis for a lot of reasons clearly connected with international order and especially with the rise of France, but also with the complicated Spanish domestic situation.

Introduction

The biennium 1667-1669 represented the point of no return for Spanish monarchy involved in such complicated circumstances able to change forever its position in Europe.

Various foreign enemies' attitude became openly hostile and numerous false friends into the same court of Madrid showed, at last, their real nature and purposes.

Louis XIV declared the war of Devolution against Madrid in 1667, Portugal obtained the independence from Spain in 1668, marquis of Camarasa, viceroy of the Kingdom of Sardinia, was killed in Cagliari in that very same summer after a hard parliamentary struggle.[2]

∗Associate Professor, University of Cagliari, Italy.

1. This study it would be possible thanks to the participation of the project "Narrating the crisis: how Western societies represented, rationalised and solved emergency situations from the late Middle Ages to the 20th century", coordinated by professor Lorenzo Tanzini and financied by Fonzazione di Sardegna"

2. Revilla Canora J. (2018) Del púlpito al destierro: las élites religiosas sardas en torno al asesinato del virrey Camarasa, *Tiempos modernos: Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 36; Id., (2013) Tan gran maldad no ha de hallar clemencia ni en mi piedad*:* El asesinato del Marqués de Camarasa, Virrey de Cerdeña, 1668, *Revista Escuela de Historia*, 12, 1; Id., (2012) El asesinato del Virrey Marqués de Camarasa y el Pregón General del Duque de San Germán (1668-1669) in E. Serrano (coord.), *De la tierra al cielo: Líneas recientes de investigación en historia moderna,* vol. 2, Zaragoza, FEHM, Institución Fernando el Católico: 575-584. See also Pilo,R. (2018) Incapacità politica di un viceré o crisi della tradizione pattizia? Il caso del marchese di Camarasa nel Regno di Sardegna negli anni della reggenza di Mariana d'Austria, in J. S. Amelang, F. Andrés, R. Benítez, R. Franch, M. Galante (eds.), *Palacios,*

Regent Queen on the Spanish throne, Emperor Leopold I's sister Mariana Habsburg, had to face with so many international problems in the more critical moment of her regency[3]: Don Juan José, the illegitimate son of Philip IV, moved with an army towards Madrid to drive out her favorite, the Jesuit Nithard.[4]

Mariana tried to avoid the internal crisis but, finally, the domestic problems added up to the exteriors: the decade of her regency (1665-1675) was complicated by so many problems but that kind of "crisis in the crisis" that occurred in 1668 needed a specific focus.

Why 1668 was such a year for the Spanish Monarchy ruled by the Habsburg-German regent Queen?[5]

Both in international and in internal policy, Queen Mariana of Habsburg had to face with a really complicated situation caused by the unstoppable rise of the France of Louis XIV.[6] That rising was going to replace Spanish Monarchy with the French one in the European stage dominated by Madrid during almost a century.

If we consider, as already mentioned, the peace of Cateu-Cambrésis as the beginning of Habsburg hegemony over Europe, it is possible to suggest the peace of Pyrenees as the end of that hegemony and the beginning of French supremacy in Europe.

Cateu-Cambrésis was a treaty of peace signed between France and Spain in 1559. It marked the end of the wars in the Italian peninsula that had started in the end of the XVth century and it also represented the very beginning of Spanish-Hapsburg hegemony in Europe. Instead, the treaty of peace called of Pyrenees signed by France and Spain in 1659 marked, in same way, the moment of the end of Spanish rise and the beginning of the French one. Indeed the war of Devolution against Spani started by Louis XIV in 1667 had its justification in the non-compliance of Pyrenees clause.

So, it is not possible to point at the unique date – 1668?- to deeply understand and explain such complex set of problems. The situation was connected with Habsburg Monarchy's crisis during the second half of the XVIIth century ready to give rise to just between 1667 and 1669.[7]

---

plazas, patíbulos. La sociedad española moderna entre el cambio y las resistencias, Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch: 553-561; Id. (2020) *Il Regno di Sardegna nell'età Barocca. Crisi politica e istituzionale al tempo del viceré Camarasa (1665- 1668),* New Digital Press, Palermo.

3. Mitchell S. (2019) Queen, Mother & Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press.

4. Pilo R. (2010) Juan Everardo Nithard y sus "Causas no causas". Razones y pretextos para el fin de un valimiento, Silex-Cajasur, Madrid-Córdoba.

5. See now Mitchell (2019).

6. Mansel Ph. (2021) Il Re del mondo. La vita di Luigi XIV, Mondadori, Milano: 213-230.

7. Storrs, Ch. (2006) *The resilience of the Spanish Monarchy 1665-1700*, Oxford University Press, New York and, now, Id. (2016) *The Spanish Resurgence 1713-1748, Yale University Press,* New Haven & London.

But move forward in order. Considering international relationships is crucial to understand and guess, also, decisions taken in domestic policy's field.

Literature Review and Methodology

That renovated historiographic approach that, learned both lessons from *Nouvelle Histoire* and suggestions from that part of New World History nearer to Braudel's thought and teaching, is nowadays able to find its own way. I mean: to make history between traditional historiography of political-diplomatic history and the new global routes' temptations.

That kind of political history, improved by using new methodology and their achievements, can easily reach and improve institutional studies. The introduction of colored *nuances* into *élites*' knowledge should be helpful to describe a powerful class of ministers and courtiers that are far from a monolith, good only to produce an unambiguous political action. Indeed, political actions (but also all human actions) improbable are cohesive and easily to decode. Reality is so complicated and problematic to explain.

This way had found in Anglo-Saxon historian Christopher Storrs one of the most incisive representatives about Spanish Monarchy's recent studies between XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. Storrs' approach came, certainly, from Helmut Koenigsberger's pioneering research about Habsburg Sicily.[8] Koeningsberger was, maybe, the first historian who considers Spanish viceroys action on the local stage with innovative instruments to studying the past. That innovation was useful in deconstructing political activities of Spanish king's ministers in Sicily and in giving back its complexity, variety and uniqueness.

From the new approach inaugurated by the Anglo-German historian, it started a vivid and rich historiographic trend especially concerning reinterpretation on courts dynamics.

It concerned the very same court of Madrid,[9] but also Spanish dominion traditionally considered such as "peripheral" and, so, "marginal" like Italian kingdoms, Naples or Sicily.[10]

It seems to be particularly important to connect and interpret events occurred in 1668 in a picture whose frame included both 1640's Catalan and Portuguese revolts[11] and that one took place in Messina in 1674.[12] And so, it is

8. Koenigsberger, H. G. (1997 but or. ed 1969) *L'esercizio dell'impero*, Sellerio, Palermo.

1. 9. Around the rich and recent historiographic activity concerning European Courts see http://iulce.es/; http://web.tiscali.it/europadellecorti/; https://cour-de-france.fr/.

10. Benigno F (1994) *Conflitto politico e conflitto sociale nell'Italia spagnola*, in *Nel sistema imperiale l'Italia spagnola*, coord. A. Musi, ESI, Napoli; Galasso G. (1975) *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno*, Einaudi, Torino.

11. Elliott, J. H. (1963) *The Revolt of the Catalans*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

also important a way back towards Roger Bigelow Merriman's "six contemporaneous revolutions."[13]

Or, to better say, a renovated interpretation of them like that one made by Francesco Benigno. It is crucial to focalize if we are going to consider 1640 as the apical moment of a presumed crisis or, *viceversa*, if we can consider it like the end of an idyllic, rich and unique imperial experience.[14]

In both cases, 1640 can be assumed as a starting point to decipher the following events that were, in some way, been inspired by this important break moment.

Explaining, therefore, 1640's events in terms of large-period-crisis that started from the end of the XVIth century – such as Ribot García for Messina and Rosario Villari for Naples had pointed out – and finished in the decade of 1670.[15]

In particular, Villari chose to backdate rebellion's plot up to Duque of Osuna's government in Sicily in the first decade of the XVIIth century and he also proposed a significant range that started at the end of the XVIth century and lasted until 1648.

In this sense, that kind of "crisis into the crisis" occurred in the triennium 1667-1669 can be reinterpreted in terms of a phase of larger path, inclined towards 1640's rebels kingdoms achievements' stabilization. Both Portuguese – with its conquer and formalization of the autonomy signed in 1668 by the treaty of Lisbon – and Catalan cases – tied with French influence since 1652 – are, indeed, especially relevant.[16]

Speaking about Catalonia is really important to connect the end of the French protectorate and the occupation of Barcelona by Don Juan José Habsburg - illegitimate Philip IV's son - happened in 1652, with the events occurred later and able to threaten the regent Queen. In fact the parade from Barcelona towards Madrid leaded in autumn 1669 by the very same don Juan José was a clear *coup*

---

12. Ribot García, L.A. (2002) *La monarquía de Espana y la guerra de Mesina: (1674-1678)*, *Actas*, Madrid and Id. (2004) "Las revueltas italianas del siglo XVII", en *Studia Historica, Italia en la Monarquía Hispánica*, vol. 26: 101-128.

1.1 13. Merriman, R.B. (1938) *Six contemporaneous revolutions,* New York, Oxford University Press. See now Benigno F (2012) *Ripensare le "sei rivoluzioni contemporanee". Considerazioni sul conflitto politico nel Seicento* in "Nuova Rivista Storica"Volume XCVI – Fascicolo III, Numero Monografico *I labirinti del colpo di Stato*: 783-816.

14. Gruzinski S., (2004) *Les quare parties du monde. Historie d'une mondialisation,* Éditions de La Martinière, Paris, but, now, Schaub, J-F. (2016) *La unión de los imperios ibéricos a escala global (1578-1668)*, Madrid, Akal. Division into periods assumed by the A. don't correspond only with Portugal independence formalization but he points at 1668 as a crucial year for the common destiny of both Iberian empires.

15. Villari, R. (1967) *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli. Le origini, 1585-1647*, Laterza, Bari.

16. Jané Checa O. (2006) *Catalunya i França al segle XVII: identitats, contraidentitats i ideologies a l'època moderna (1640-1700)*, Editorial Afers, Catarroja. See now Id. (2016), *Louis XIV at la Catalogne. De la politique au Sud de l'Europe au XVIIe siècle,* PUP, Perpignan.

d'état against the Queen in her favorite Nithard.

Results

It seems that the way towards rebellion opened by Barcelona in 1640 had to find, in same way, a kind of legitimate accomplishment in the military support of the Catalans against the Queen's favorite exiled after the events of so hot autumn 1669.

But any considerations cannot be fully understood if we do not put French into Spanish *affaires.* Why? Because French, after monarchical revolution occurred in 1661 at the death of cardinal Mazzarino, became a different country. So, Louis XIV started the construction of an absolute state corroborate by an efficient net of administrative body, following the route started by cardinal Richelieu and the king Louis XIII.

But Louis XIV surpassed them, especially for what concerning foreign policy, achieving the most relevant innovations for French monarchy:[17] in 1662 Paris signed a treaty of coalition with Holland running against England and interrupted negotiations with Madrid on the French County and Luxembourg; in 1663 renewed French participation to the Rhine's alliance and the following year signed both treaty of coalition with Brandenburg and Saxony.[18]

In 1666 declared war to England and claimed in his wife's name, the succession on some Spanish territories in the Low Countries. In 1667, however, signed a secret treaty whit the English king committing French to not participate against England in favor of Holland. Louis XIV succeeds so in avoiding English opposition against French annexation of Brabante. Then, in May 1667, he started the Devolution War that was going to end in 1668 with the peace of Aachen among Holland, England, and Sweden and that marked French acquisition of twelve cities in Spanish Low Countries.

Both secret treaties between Paris and London, such as that one between Paris and Wien – concerning Spanish territories' division – were not so secret, indeed. Information runs quickly among European courts. Both treaties were part of an ambitious project that would last until peace of Rijswijk in 1697. In fact, only with the presence on the English throne of William III of Orange after the *Glorious Revolution* of 1688-89, Louis found an opposition against his hegemonic will on Europe.

After all, the *siècle de Louis XIV* quoting the famous definition by Voltaire, was so able in made forgotten so many significant political events of other European countries.

17. Ruocco, G., (2002), *Lo stato sono io. Luigi XIV e la «rivoluzione monarchica» del marzo 1661*, Il Mulino, Bologna.

18. Mansel Ph. (2019).

It is not just a coincidence if other European king's names of the XVIIth century are less known then the name of the king of France. Less known or, sometimes, really out from European memory.

Spanish monarchy had become, in addition, subject of division for the hunger of both sovereigns, in Paris and in Wien. And yet the effects of secret treaty between Louis XIV and emperor Leopold I – well known, as already said, in courtesan and diplomatic contexts - were very relevant because of the setting off the end of the traditional strategic axis Madrid-Wien. Actually, Emperor's ambiguous policy and his ministers' lacking of confidence towards Queen Regent Mariana had already weakened the friendly relationship between Habsburgs family's two branches. Indeed, the treaty was able to produce an unexpected effect into the court of Madrid, a destabilizing effect for the court equilibrium and, especially, for the authority of the Queen.

The moment to devise a *coupe d'état*, which outcome would extremely favorable to French, could not have been better than that.[19]

In autumn 1669 Don Juan José tried to end with the regency of the German Queen marching towards the court of Madrid with an army of 300 soldiers under his command. Troopers, left from Catalonia, had the main aim in expelling the Austrian Jesuit Nithard, confessor and favorite of the Queen, far from Madrid.[20]

Dynamics of crisis goes inserted in the context of the French Fronde and, also, widespread hostility towards favorite ministers all over Europe.[21]

In the opinion of an expert of Charles II of Spain, Gabriel Maura y Gamazo, the tragic events of 1668-1669 well represented the situation of common uncertainty fluttering above Europe: an *ultimatum* that it suppose be able to determine no crisis, was able, in those years, to "dar en tierra con todo un Inquisidor general" (obtain the fall of a general Inquisitor).[22]

Maura was speaking about the effects of Don Juan José's threat against Nithard. And finally, Juan José's plot ended with an event that Henry Kamen defined "the first military pronouncement of Early Modern Spanish History" that had, among its protagonists, few of the most influent ministers of the Monarchy during the regency of Mariana.[23]

---

19. Ribot García, L.A. (2010) *Orígenes políticos del testamento de Carlos II. La gestación del cambio dinástico en España. Discurso leído el día 17 de Octubre de 2010*, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid.

20. Maura y Gamazo G. (1942) *Vida y reinado de Carlos II*, 3 Vol.s., Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, I: 83-85. See also *Los jesuitas en España y en el mundo hispánico*, (2004) coord. E. Teófanes, Marcial Pons Historia, Madrid: 162, 169-171.

21. On the historiographic debate on the Fronde see Benigno, F. (1999) *Specchi della rivoluzione. Conflitto e identità politica nell'Europa moderna*, Donzelli, Roma: 3-59; 105-198.

22. Maura y Gamazo, G. (1911-1915), *Carlos II y su corte*, 2 Vol.s, Librería de F. Beltran, Madrid, I: 9.

23. Kamen, H., *La España de Carlos II* (1987) Crítica, Barcelona: 532.

As already said, the imminent French threat, Leopold's ambiguous anti-Spanish policy, Portuguese's war aftermath and the urgent need of reformulate diplomatic relationship with the after-Cromwell England were the main topics in the international agenda of the Spanish monarchy during the second half of XVIIth century.

Internal difficulties easily linked with foreign policy disaster and as French, so England, meant to take advantage of Spanish monarchy's fragility.

On May the 17th 1667, French ambassador in Madrid delivered a letter of the king of France to Mariana: Louis XIV claimed his intention of take possession of Brabant. Any attempt from Madrid to obstruct that project would be considered such as an act of war.

The situation had become critical on both matters, internal and international. But the election of the Pope Clement IX, who had been ambassador in Madrid from 1644 to 1652, was received with "vivísimas y muy gratas esperancias" ("great hope").[24]

That hope had not disappointed Madrid because the Pope tried to maintain the peace between Spanish and French, sending in Madrid a Nuncio of great confidence such as Cardinal Federico Borromeo. Roman involvement in Spanish *affaires* seemed to confirm traditional Saint Siege influence on European equilibrium.

Rome managed, once again, to avoid European conflicts arbitrating between competitors' interests.[25]

But just in few months' time the situation was more complicated for the Spanish monarchy: French army threat to Brabant; the *Junta de Govierno* was divided and so unable to give a collegial and uniform direction to Spanish policy; Queen regent was deeply conditioned by her favorite and confessor; in the *Consejo de Estado* discontent ruled.

There were two parties: the Queen and her favorite on one side, the main part of aristocracy on the other side: on the 13th of October 1668 was discovered a plot finalized to banish Austrian Jesuit.

And so, in the meanwhile Madrid was paralyzed intro intrigues and factional fights, the international situation got worst and worst: on the 23rd of January 1668 Holland, England and Sweden signed an alliance against France. This alliance was ineffective until 1689 when the new king of England, William III Orange, became the leader. Starting from that moment Louis XIV had an enemy that was able to lead France towards the peace of Rijswijk in 1697. Only that date can be considered, in some way, a halt for the French rise, started in 1659 (peace of Pirenees with Spanish monarchy) and that would have continued until the end of the Seven Years war in 1763.

---

24. De Estenaga y Echevarría, N. (1929-1930): 279.

25. Menniti Ippolito, A. (1999) *Il tramonto della Curia nepotista. Papi, nipoti e burocrazia curiale tra XVI e XVII secolo*, Viella, Roma and Visceglia M.A. (2010) *Roma papale e Spagna. Diplomatici, nobili e religiosi tra due corti*, Bulzoni, Roma.

Going back to 1668, a year of crisis for the Spanish monarchy but certainly an *annus mirabilis* for the French, few days before was signed, as already mentioned, the secret French-imperial treaty concerned the division of Spanish dominions. Spanish monarchy was not the greatest power in Europe so both Spanish colonies, such as Spanish European territories had become nothing more than desirable spoils to share.

Thanks to Charles II of England's mediation, Madrid signed in Lisbon a peace with Portugal. In the meanwhile the war against France in the Low Countries turned against the Spanish crown even if it ended with the peace of Aachen that was going to introduce no news in the *status quo*.

At the court of Madrid, in the meanwhile, had developed a mood of increasing hostility towards Nithard by the *Junta de Govierno* and the *Consejo de Estado:* the Jesuit was considered guilty of all the problems of the monarchy, from the fragility in foreign policy to the domestic situation.

All carefulness was taken to avoid public demonstrations of discontent. Nevertheless, there were a lot of publications, from satire to any kind of offensive pamphlets against the favorite of the Queen.[26] That kind of manuscripts widely circulated and we can find exemplar of them nowadays in almost all European libraries. Although authors were, in the majority of the cases, anonymous, it is not so hard to guess the instigators: before all, the ministers involved in the plot and members of that "intelectualidad murmuradora, incapaz de manejar otras armas que el pasquín y el libelo" (grumbled intellighentsia, able only in using writings).[27]

There were two simultaneous fights: one in manipulating information and the other in creating consent. A military reaction from Juan José and his own army was, so, expected since January-February 1669.

The Nuncio Federico Borromeo wrote to Rome that the situation was really critical: the Queen would not give up and so there were no work possible to avoid the crisis:

> lusinghati la Regina e il Confessore in creder don Giovanni privo egualmente di forze e di ragione non admetteranno introduttione di trattato alcuno né consiglio di Sua Beatitudine se non quando non sarà più in tempo.[28]

In the following weeks the mediation of the Nuncio to avoid the institutional crisis had uselessly continued.

---

26. Benigno (1999): 134-140. For Spanish satires of that period see now Hermant H. (2012), *Guerre de plumes. Publicité et cutlutres politiques dans l'Espagna du XVIIe siècle,* Casa de Velázquez, Madrid.

27. Maura (1942) I: 158.

2. 28. ARCHIVIO SEGRETO VATICANO, Segr. Stato, Spagna, Vol. 133, ff. 337r-338r, *Letter from Apostolic Nuncio*, Madrid, 23 February 1669.

On the 25th of February 1669 Don Juan José declared the *ultimatum* from Torrejón de Ardoz: Nithard had to leave Madrid immediately. Jesuit, finally, run away from the Court towards Rome.[29]

What had happened in Madrid court – I mean the difficulties of pro-Wien party and the victory of the pro-French one grown even before 1668 – were able to project Spanish crisis even beyond courtesan's borders, up to the farther kingdoms. Not only, but also, the alliances' reconstruction cannot be connected with the only interests of Wien or Paris. There was a multi-colored and complex political situation in which were deeply involved so *donjuanistas* such as *nithardistas*.[30]

This was the situation that don Agustín de Castelví, *síndico* (delegate) del los *Stamenti* (ranks) of Sardinian Parliament, run into when he arrived in Madrid to present Sardinian *élite*'s requests to the Queen and the *Consejo de Aragón.*

Sardinian cetual reunion had opened in 1666 and was suddenly interrupted in May 1668 without the acceptance of the *donativo* (gift) from the kingdom in favor of the crown. In two months' time were be killed in Cagliari don Agustín de Castelví (June 1668) and the very same viceroy maquis of Camarasa (July 1668). The central crisis, in some way, could arrive also in the marginal context: from the 1640's crisis to Sicilian rebellion of 1674, what had happened in the biennium 1667-1668 can be considered part of that crisis' path.[31]

Discussion

There would be a lot to say about XVII century crisis and also about the new political model originated during the baroque age. With respect to international relationships, to shaping new national model and, especially, with the revolutionary changes in politics due to the presence of favorite ministers in all the main European courts.

However, there are two main discussion fields on which I would like to focus. The first one concerns if it is possible – necessary, maybe – seriously start re-thinking those so called "six contemporary revolutions" and the entire crisis of the XVIIth century on political, economic (so called "re-feudalization") and also climatic (so called "little glaciation") ranges.[32]

---

29. BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL ESPAÑOLA, Madrid, Ms. 5742, C. CRESPÍ, *Diario*, unpulished, almost 1671, f. 413r: "Lunes a 25 (mine: de febrero) salió de Madrid el Inquisidor general de la Reyna para salir de estos reynos respecto de los clamores de los pueblos de que le gobernase un alemán, y el odio que le tenián concebido y también por la persecución del señor don Juan de Austria que había emprendido esta salida con todo conato y peligro del movimiento que hoy se conoce en Madrid". See also Maura (1942) I: 155-156.

30. Hermant (2012).

31. Ribot García (1982); Id. (2002).

32. Benigno (2012).

This approach considers economical and social aspects in their *longue durée* and the plural influences between them in the terms of natural evolutions and mutual involvement. So: facts or events able to produce effects that become facts or events related to them but interpreted like part of the same process. Process becomes the object of investigation.

The second one concerns the opportunity for political history to have once again something more to say in historiographic discourses. The *focus* on a specific year – 1668 - is able to lead the narration far in time, so earlier and later. It occurred because it was the purpose of who is writing this paper to demonstrate the deep and strong connections between the so called *historie événementielle* and the so called *longue durée*. Both definitions were coined in the first half of the XXth century but nowadays historiography can easily carry on without them. Or, to better say, make them finally conciliate.

I am convinced the day to release from that antinomy had come: we can stop to consider *longue durée* against *historie événementielle.* I think that a new political history approach should learn *Annales'* lesson and start moving their steps far away from that strict distinction.

Conclusion

In conclusion: a case study on a single year is able to push the narration well beyond, even if it concerns only European sphere and analyze just only two among a lot of protagonists.[33] Studying events occurred during only a year pushes inevitable historian to find causes and consequences of those events. And so historian has to start with a chain of facts and persons and places linked one to each other. Only following that chain towards previous (but linked) events and towards successive (but linked) events it is possible to understand anything about that single year. It still is one year but it is not alien from others. It is in the middle of the chain. Who wrote had the clear objective in narrating Spanish monarchy's crisis; or, to better say, the end of the Spanish hegemony in Europe.

So, 1668 was a great year for Portugal that had reached, finally, the independence from Spanish crown. It was, also, a lucky year for France that is going to replace Spanish hegemony. In the same way, we can consider XVI century in terms of a *siglo de oro* for Spanish monarchy ruled by Charles V, so we can give the very same tag to XVIIth century Holland. And so on.

The objective of this paper was to consider the concurrence of a lot of events, facts and situations that contributed in Spanish decline and positioned Madrid's court in a marginal role respect to the European equilibrium.

33. Schilling, H. (2017) *1517. Storia mondiale di un anno*, Keller, Rovereto and the classical study Le Roy Ladurie E. (1977) *Storia di un paese: Montaillou, un villaggio occitanico durante l'inquisizione, 1294-1324*, Rizzoli, Milano.

Certainly studying the radical change of Spanish role in the second half of XVIIth century, pushed me in involving in the narration others European actors. This approach allowed me to consider the Spanish fall into the European relationships and to connect falling and rising into the early modern Europe political settlement.

Bibliography

Benigno, F. "Conflitto politico e conflitto sociale nell'Italia spagnola." (Political conflict and social conflict in Spanish Italy.) In Nel sistema imperiale l'Italia spagnola, edited by A. Musi, ESI, Napoli;

Id. "Aristocrazia e stato in Sicilia nell'epoca di Filippo III." (Aristocracy and state in Sicily in the era of Philip III.) In Signori, patrizi, cavalieri nell'età moderna, edited by M. A. Visceglia. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 76-93.

Id. "Vecchio e nuovo nella Sicilia del Seicento: il ruolo della colonizzazione feudale." (Old and new in seventeenth-century Sicily: the role of feudal colonization.) in Studi Storici 1 (1986): 93-107.

Id. "Il dilemma della fedeltà: l'Almirante di Castiglia e il governo della Sicilia." (The dilemma of loyalty: the Almirante of Castile and the government of Sicily.) In L'istituzione viceregia, modelli politici e pratiche di governo, edited by N. Bazzano, in «Trimestre», XXXV/1 (2002): 81-102.

Id. "Messina e il duca d'Osuna: un conflitto politico nella Sicilia del Seicento." (Messina and the Duke of Osuna: a political conflict in seventeenth-century Sicily.) In Il governo della città. Patriziati e politica nella Sicilia moderna, edited by D. Ligresti. Catania: CUECM, 1990, 173-207.

Id. "La questione della capitale: lotta politica e rappresentanza degli interessi nella Sicilia del Seicento" (The question of the capital: political struggle and representation of interests in seventeenth-century Sicily.) Società e Storia 47 (1990): 27-59.

Id. "Considerazioni sulla storiografia municipale siciliana di età spagnola." (Considerations on Sicilian municipal historiography of the Spanish era.) In Il libro e la piazza. Le storie locali dei Regni di Napoli e Sicilia in età moderna, coord. A. Lerra. Manduria-Roma-Bari: Lacaita, 2004, 51-68.

Id. "Ripensare le «sei rivoluzioni contemporanee». Considerazioni sul conflitto politico nel Seicento." (Rethinking the "six contemporary revolutions". Considerations on political conflict in the seventeenth century.) In «Nuova Rivista Storica»Volume XCVI – Fascicolo III, Numero Monografico I labirinti del colpo di Stato (2012): 783-816.

Elliott,J. H.(1963) The Revolt of the Catalans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Galasso G. (1975) Mezzogiorno medievale e modern. Torino: Einaudi, 1994. (de) Certeau M. La prise de parole et autres écrits politiques. (Speaking and other political writings.) Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994.

Gruzinski S. Les quare parties du monde. Historie d'une mondialisation. (The four parts of the world. History of globalization.) Paris: Éditions de La Martinière, 2004.

Koenigsberger, H. G. L'esercizio dell'impero. (The exercise of empire.) Palermo: Sellerio, 1997 but or. ed 1969.

Id. "The Parliament of Sicily and the Spanish Empire." In Mélanges Antonio Marongiu, Éditions de la librairie encyclopedique, Bruxelles: 81-96 and Id., (1971) The Habsburgs and Europe 1516-1660. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968.

Mansel P. Il Re del mondo. La vita di Luigi XIV. (The King of the world. The life of Louis XIV.) Milano: Mondadori, 2021, 213-230;

Merriman, R. B. Six contemporaneous revolutions. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.

Mitchell S. Queen, Mother & Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019.

Musi, A. L'Italia dei Viceré. Integrazione e resistenza nel sistema imperiale spagnolo. (The Italy of the Viceroys. Integration and resistance in the Spanish imperial system.) Cava de' Tirreni: Avagliano, 2000.

Pilo, R. "Incapacità politica di un viceré o crisi della tradizione pattizia? Il caso del marchese di Camarasa nel Regno di Sardegna negli anni della reggenza di Mariana d'Austria." (Political incapacity of a viceroy or crisis of the treaty tradition? The case of the Marquis of Camarasa in the Kingdom of Sardinia in the years of the regency of Mariana of Austria.) In Palacios, plazas, patíbulos. La sociedad española moderna entre el cambio y las resistencias, edited by J. S. Amelang, F. Andrés, R. Benítez, R. Franch, M. Galante. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2018, 553-561.

Id. Il Regno di Sardegna nell'età Barocca. Crisi politica e istituzionale al tempo del viceré Camarasa (1665-1668). (The Kingdom of Sardinia in the Baroque age. Political and institutional crisis at the time of the viceroy Camarasa (1665-1668).) Palermo: New Digital Press, 2020. Vol. XI;

Id. Juan Everardo Nithard y sus «Causas no causas». Razones y pretextos para el fin de un valimiento. (Juan Everardo Nithard and his "Causes not causes." Reasons and pretexts for the end of a validation.) Madrid-Córdoba: Silex-Cajasur, 2010.

Revilla Canora J. "Del púlpito al destierro: las élites religiosas sardas en torno al asesinato del virrey Camarasa." (From the pulpit to exile: the Sardinian religious elites around the assassination of Viceroy Camarasa.) Tiempos modernos: Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna 36 (2018). Ribot García L. A."Las provincias italianas y la defensa de la monarquía." (The Italian provinces and the defense of the monarchy.) In Nel sistema imperiale l'Italia spagnola (1994).

Id. "Tan gran maldad no ha de hallar clemencia ni en mi piedad: El asesinato del Marqués de Camarasa, Virrey de Cerdeña, 1668." (Such great evil will not find clemency even in my pity: The murder of the Marquis of Camarasa.) Revista Escuela de Historia 12, no. 1 (2013).

Id. "El asesinato del Virrey Marqués de Camarasa y el Pregón General del Duque de San Germán (1668-1669)." (The assassination of the Viceroy Marquis of Camarasa and the General Proclamation of the Duke of San Germán (1668-1669).) In De la tierra al cielo: Líneas recientes de investigación en historia moderna, edited by E. Serrano, vol. 2. Zaragoza: FEHM, Institución Fernando el Católico, 2012, 575-584.

Ribot García L. A."Las provincias italianas y la defensa de la monarquía." (The Italian provinces and the defense of the monarchy.) In Nel sistema imperiale l'Italia spagnola (1994).

Id. "Las revueltas italianas del siglo XVII, in «Studia Historica»." (The Italian revolts of the 17th century, in «Studia Historica».) Italia en la Monarquía Hispánica 26 (2004): 101-128.

Id. La monarquía de Espana y la guerra de Mesina (1674-1678). (The monarchy of Spain and the war of Mesina (1674-1678).) Madrid: Actas, 2002.

Id. "Ira regis o clementia. El caso de Mesina y la respuesta a la rebelión en la Monarquía de España." (The wrath of the king, O clemency. The case of Messina and the response to the rebellion in the Monarchy of Spain.) In Vísperas de Sucesión. Europa y la Monarquía de Carlos II, edited by Bernardo José García García and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño. Madrid: Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2015, 129-158.

Schaub, J-F. La unión de los imperios ibéricos a escala global (1578-1668). (The Union of Iberian Athens Journal of History XY 13 Empires on a Global Scale (1578-1668).) Madrid: Akal, 2016.

Storrs, C. The resilience of the Spanish Monarchy 1665-1700. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Id. The Spanish Resurgence 1713-1748. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2016.

Athens Journal of History - Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024 – Pages 41-64

Plutarch's Hesiod: Tradition and Identity Formation in a Greco-Roman Context

*By Peter Malisse**

In Plutarch's times Hesiod was still seen as the second founding father of Panhellenic culture and identity. For various reasons Plutarch held Hesiod in high esteem and played an important role in keeping the poet under the spotlight of paideia. In present article three Plutarchan sources are re-examined Hesiod's claim to have won a poetry contest: Schol. Hesiod WD 650-662 and references to the story in Table Talk and The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men. Starting point is a close reading of the Proclan scholion in the light of Plutarch's sympotic work. While the former introduces a Plutarch averse to mythopoeia, the latter shows just how important story-telling is to him in promoting and maintaining Panhellenic tradition and identity under a Roman rule.

Introduction

In the long tradition of Panhellenic identity formation,[1] Hesiod is second to Homer among the "founding fathers". This is one reason why the reception history of *Theogony* and *Works and Days* (hereafter: *Erga*), the two works assigned consensually to him, is far less substantial than that of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Consequently, any ancient source that contributes to a better understanding of how Hesiod and his work have been cultivated as identity-defining in Greek and Roman antiquity, is treasured today with great care. Such source is an unexpectedly critical note by Plutarch to a supposedly autobiographical passage. The famous Proclan scholion[2] in which this criticism is handed down, serves as the starting point for some thoughts on the following two observations. First, the integration, critical or otherwise, of Hesiodic material in Plutarch's sympotic work appears to have, apart from its specific aims, a strong tradition-forming character. Second, Plutarch's contribution to the Hesiodic tradition formation prompts the question of how fiction and non-fiction "blended" in the ancient Greek self-identification with the past.

We start with our problem statement based on the passages discussed, which involves a textual and contextual presentation of the *Erga* passage in question in order to get a clear picture of the what, how and where of Plutarch's assessment through Proclus… or *vice versa*. In fact, the underlying problem is that

*PhD Student, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

1. Although taken from a study on child psychology, the following definition meets our idea of identity formation: "the complex manner in which human beings establish a unique view of self and is characterized by continuity and inner unity" (HERMAN 2011, s.v. Identity formation). In reference to ancient Greece, see PAPANIKOS 2024.

2. Schol. Hesiod *WD* 650-662: PERTUSI 1955, 205-206 (= Plut. fr. 84 Sandbach).

Proclus speaks in the name of Plutarch, while the discourse gives the impression that the scholiast is pushing through Plutarch at least in part his own judgment. Some mainly philological findings further invite a closer look at Plutarch's narrative integration of the Greek past in *Table Talk* and the *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* and his specific attitude toward the Hesiodic legacy. This discussion leads to a concluding reflection on the tension between fiction and non-fiction within tradition and identity formation with Plutarch in particular and in Greco-Roman reality in general.

Studies on this matter are focused on a specific (philosophical, historical, moral, educational...) aspect of Plutarch's multifaceted personality and work. Apart from its discourse analytical approach, this article also differs methodologically to the extent that, beyond these facets, we search for (mostly hidden) traces of tradition and identity formation. In doing so, we project our findings against a Greco-Roman horizon, which, or our case, needs not much specification to make our point. For the readers in search of more information on the latter, some specialized studies are included in the references below.

A Problematic Scholion to a Problematic Passage

The *Theogony* is the first ancient Greek work bearing its author's name, and *Erga* contains information long cherished as autobiographical. Besides testimony to Hesiod's Aetolian ancestry and his father's seafaring past, there is above all the following rather extensive account of a victory in a Euboean poetry contest:

650 οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηί γ᾽ ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον,
εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὔβοιαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ἣ ποτ᾽ Ἀχαιοὶ
μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν
Ἑλλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα.
ἔνθα δ᾽ ἐγὼν ἐπ᾽ ἄεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος
655 Χαλκίδα τ᾽ εἰς ἐπέρησα: τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ
ἄεθλ᾽ ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορος: ἔνθα μέ φημι
ὕμνῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ᾽ ὠτώεντα.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσῃς Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ᾽ ἀνέθηκα,
ἔνθα με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοιδῆς.
660 τόσσον τοι νηῶν γε πεπείρημαι πολυγόμφων·
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο·
Μοῦσαι γάρ μ᾽ ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν. (*Erga* 650-662)

For never yet did I sail the broad sea in a boat,
except to Euboea from Aulis, where once the Achaeans,
waiting through the winter, gathered together a great host
to sail from holy Greece to Troy with its beautiful women.
There I myself crossed over into Chalcis for the games of valorous Amphidamas
– that great-hearted man's sons had announced and established many prizes –

and there, I declare, I gained victory with a hymn,
and carried off a tripod with handles.
This I dedicated to the Heliconian Muses,
where they first set me upon the path of clear-sounding song.
This is as much experience of many-bolted ships as I have required;
yet even so I shall speak forth the mind of aegis-holding Zeus,
for the Muses taught me to sing an inconceivable hymn.[3]

For a long time these verses have been cherished as authentic because they provide a historical alibi to the plot of the Ἀγὼν Ομήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου/*Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*/*Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (second century CE). However, within a growing tendency to consider "Hesiod" as merely the historical-symbolical name of a literary and intellectual tradition, the passage has been increasingly contested.[4] One argument is the critical voice of Plutarch in the following, most likely Proclan scholion:

Οὐ γὰρ πώποτε νηί γ' ἐπέπλων·
ταῦτα πάντα περὶ τῆς Χαλκίδος <καὶ> τοῦ Ἀμφιδάμαντος καὶ τοῦ ἄθλου καὶ τοῦ τρίποδος ἐμβεβλῆσθαί φησιν ὁ Πλούταρχος <ὡς> οὐδὲν ἔχοντα χρηστόν. [ἀθετοῦνται δέκα στίχοι διὰ τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας νεώτερον.] τὸν μὲν οὖν Ἀμφιδάμαντα ναυμαχοῦντα πρὸς Ἐριτρέας ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ληλάντου ἀποθανεῖν, ἆθλα δὲ ἐπ' αὐτῶι καὶ ἀγῶνας θεῖναι τελευτήσαντι τοὺς παῖδας, νικῆσαι δὲ ἀγωνιζόμενον τὸν Ἡσίοδον καὶ ἆθλον μουσικὸν τρίποδα λαβεῖν καὶ ἀναθεῖναι τοῦτον ἐν τῶι Ἑλικῶνι – ὅπου καὶ κάτοχος ἐγεγόνει ταῖς Μούσαις – καὶ ἐπίγραμμα ἐπὶ τούτωι θρυλοῦσι. πάντα οὖν ταῦτα ληρώδη λέγων ἐκεῖνος, ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄρχεται τῶν εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ πλοῦ συντεινόντων ἤματα πεντήκοντα.

For I have never sailed in a ship – Plutarch says that all this about Chalcis and Amphidamas and the contest and the tripod is an interpolation with nothing valid in it. [Ten verses are athetized on account of the story's being more recent.] For they babble on about the story that Amphidamas died fighting a naval battle against the Eritreans for the Lelantine plain, and that his children set up funeral games and prizes for him when he had died, and that Hesiod was victorious in the competition and won the musical prize and set it up on Helicon – where he also became

3. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes and translations are taken from *Loeb Classical Libraries*.

4. As can be seen from another scholion (Prolegomenon B 13-16, PERTUSI 1955, 3) it was already suggested in antiquity that the character of his brother Perses was fictional. However, a real debate on the historicity of Hesiod dates back to the late twentieth century. Lamberton calls the non-believers "Parryists" or "Nagyists" (LAMBERTON 1988, 493) after Milton Parry and Gregory Nagy. Both assume that Hesiod, like Homer, are invented names, but do not attach any significant consequences to this. Nagy also agrees with Parry's claim that "Hesiod" was a name used by several poets within the Hesiodic tradition, in which *Theogony* and *Erga* arose through "an on-going composition-in-performance" (NAGY 2009, 274). For other participants in the debate, see SCODEL 2009.

> possessed by the Muses – and the epigram on this (tripod). So declaring all of this to be nonsense, he begins from those verses concerning the proper time for sailing: "for fifty days…".[5]

Textually, Hesiod's verses and Proclus' scholion speak for themselves; contextually, however, they are quite problematic. The *Erga* fragment narrativizes an important turning point in the poet's life, second to his so-called *Dichterweihe* or encounter with the Muses in *Theogony* 22-28: the victory in a non-Boeotian poetry contest convinces him that he is indeed gifted by the Muses. According to tradition (cf. infra: Pausanias' observation), Hesiod dedicated the trophy, a bronze tripod, to them in their sanctuary near his hometown Ascra. Proclus goes into detail about Plutarch's rejection of the passage as "οὐδὲν ἔχοντα χρηστόν – with nothing valid in it" and even "babble" (cf. ληρώδη – nonsense). This, he concludes, is why Plutarch rejects the lines between v. 649 (οὔτε τι ναυτιλίης σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν – having no expertise at all-in either seafaring or boat) and v. 663 (ἤματα πεντήκοντα μετὰ τροπὰς ἠελίοιο – around fifty days after the solstice).[6] Probably a later scholiast added an extra reason, labelling the passage as post-Hesiodic (νεώτερον – more recent).[7]

While the communication of both Hesiod and Proclus is in itself crystal clear, there is too much and too little context, respectively. As regards the contest story, while not the *parekbasis* per se (characteristic of epic verbiage) raises suspicion, its integration into the account of seafaring is all too clever yet again poorly motivated. The trigger for the digression is fine, but the conclusion is not. "Hymn/ὕμνος" as a narrative motif (v. 657 ⇔ v. 662) contributes only to the internal coherence of the passage. Inwardly, it establishes the connection between the contest and the sanctuary of the Heliconian Muses, but, outwardly, not that with seafaring. Hence the resuming of this initial theme in v. 663 feels rather abrupt. As for Proclus, not only is it unclear which source he relied on, we do not know how he used that source either: which words are Plutarch's and which those of Proclus? Could it be that the opening sentence is quoted from Plutarch and then further elaborated by the scholiast? Or are we dealing with the summary of a more extensive argumentation by Plutarch, perhaps from his lost commentary on *Works and Days*? The reference to the epigram alone, not mentioned by Hesiod, makes these questions more than pertinent.

Whatever of it, before getting back to these issues, it bears reminding that our concern is not with the authenticity of the *Erga* passage or the historicity of its content, but with Plutarch's judgement as it has been handed down. The interpolation problem as such and the full or partial plausibility of the story are

5. Translation: BASSINO 2019, 12. The highlighted words and phrases are important for the discussion that follows.

6. The 'δέκα στίχοι' of the second scholiast represent only one voice in the discussion about the number of verses athetized by Plutarch; see LAMBERTON 1988, 500, n. 29.

7. About the addition, which only occurs in Pertusi, see LAMBERTON 1988, 501, n. 30.

not at issue here.[8] Our focus is on why and how these autobiographical data were called into question.[9] One of the triggers of the debate was the material link between the contest and the Hesiod cult[10] at the Valley of the Muses nearby Thespiai, namely the bronze tripod, which Pausanias mentions rather in passing.

On Helicon tripods have been dedicated, of which the oldest is the one which it is said Hesiod received for winning the prize for song at Chalcis on the Euripus. (*Description of Greece, Boeotia* 9.31.3)

In the *Certamen*, it is said that the tripod was inscribed with the following epigram:

> Hesiod dedicated this to the Muses of Helicon,
> having defeated in song at Chalcis the godly Homer. (*Certamen* 13)

According to Richard Lamberton the whole story is an aetiological fabrication, a "lore" to provide both the "hoax" of the tripod and the Thespian cult of Hesiod with an "aetion".[11] We quote his conclusion regarding Plutarch's assessment of *Erga* 650-662 in its entirety because it makes an interesting starting point for our enquiry:

> The obvious conclusion seems to be that Plutarch knew that the tripod on display in the grove of the Muses was not what it was claimed to be – that it was in fact an attempt on the part of the attendants of a Hellenistic shrine to fabricate archaic roots. By condemning the passage that described it as an 'interpolation', he was pulling the rug from under the prized exhibit, but still more important, he was tacitly indicating his own knowledge that the Hesiodic poems had been tampered with at some stage in their history, in order to accommodate them to the shrine and its artifacts. Without the slightest intention to undermine the personal, historic Hesiod, he was indicating how one element of that persona, one bit of pseudo-autobiographical information, entered the canon, in the service of the festival of the Muses.[12]

Proclus' Plutarch

Within the scope of his study on the institutionalized cult of the Muses and Hesiod at Thespiai (cf. title), Lamberton's conclusion is more than satisfactory. However, when looking beyond that scope, it will not escape the reader's notice

8. Perhaps Plutarch was not even hinting at an athetesis, only pointing out that it is an interpolation. After all, in clear cases of athetization Proclus' word choice is far less ambiguous than the above "ἐμβεβλῆσθαί φησιν". Cf. infra.

9. For a content-related discussion, see STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 534-538 (sqq.). Her conclusions as regards the why and how are dealt with later.

10. About the cult of Hesiod, see NAGY 2009, 304-308.

11. LAMBERTON 1988, 503-504.

12. Ibid, 504.

that, while his argument presupposes a great deal about Plutarch, it does not probe the *why* of his supposed (φησιν) athetization. Lamberton suggests that Plutarch knew the true facts of the tripod and wanted to debunk the legend attached to it. Thus, subtly showcasing his own expertise, Plutarch would have questioned the propaganda of the Mouseia but not the historicity of the poet. However plausible, these assumptions lack a clear motive for the elimination of the disputed passage. Neither Homer's name nor the problematic inscription on the tripod are mentioned by Hesiod. Why then label these verses an interpolation on the basis of later fabrications from Alcidamas until the very *Certamen*?[13]

Whatever the reason,[14] the implication of Proclus' argumentation *by proxy* is not minus. His choice of words gives the erroneous impression that Plutarch would have been a relentless Hesiod specialist who only accepts irrefutable historical evidence, thereby rejecting all that gives *Erga* a personal touch. Would Plutarch dismiss anything unsubstantiated as not only "of no valour" (cf. οὐδὲν χρηστόν) but also as "babble" (cf. θρυλοῦσι) and "nonsense" (cf. ληρώδη),[15] even if this discredited a local tradition in the region where he was born, grew up and also lived for a considerable time? I'm not sure Proclus' wording suits the gentle and open-minded voice known from Plutarch's sympotic works and it is a discourse that certainly does not fit a historian who puts plausibility (πιθανότης) over certainty (cf. infra).

From the above, a friction comes to the fore between the scholiast's harsh tone and the object of criticism, viz the biographical anecdote that (later) became the foundation story of the Thespian cult of Hesiod. This leads us back to an

13. *Contest of Homer and Hesiod (Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi)* was arguably written sometime after Plutarch under Hadrian. Its basic idea either inspired or was inspired by Hesiod's (interpolated?) account of the contest in *Erga* 650-662. As is well known, Friedrich Nietzsche considered *Mouseion*, a lost and ill-documented work of the Gorgian sophist Alcidamas, its direct source. According to Martin West, the plot was indeed an original idea of Alcidamas (WEST 1978, 319, ad vv. 650-662. See further: GRAZIOSI 2002, 168-80, KONING 2010, 239-268 and BASSINO 2019. As regards the ages of Homer and Hesiod, the matter was already discussed even before Herodotus located both "not more than four hundred years before my own time" (*The Persian Wars*, 2.53.2-3). See, among others, KONING 2010, 40-43 and STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 542.

14. STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 537: "Plutarch did not only expel WD 654-662 from the poem but also dismissed the biographical story altogether. While the former rejection was due to a perceived inconsistency, the latter is likely to have been based on a different criterion, namely, Plutarch's views on the relative chronology of the ancient poets. Hesiod's dating in antiquity was often contingent on the assumption that his opponent at Chalcis was Homer, thus, ever since Wilamowitz, it has been thought that Plutarch's rejection of the contest derives from a critical tradition that views Homer and Hesiod as non-contemporaries."

15. LSJ provides the following basic explanations and translations for the three terms: χρηστός: "useful, good of its kind, serviceable"; θρυλεῖν: "make a confuse noise, chatter, babble", + acc.: "repeat over and over"; ληρώδης: "frivolous, silly".

earlier question about the scholion: is the choice of words by Plutarch, by Proclus or a mix of both? Richard Hunter took a closer look at similar cases and comes to the following conclusion:

> Proclus often cites Plutarch by name, but it is also clear that much in these scholia will derive from the earlier scholar, even where he is not named. (…) There are no really objective criteria to help us in the attempt to decipher Plutarchan material within the Proclan scholia, and differences of judgement are inevitable. A common problem occurs when Proclus explicitly cites Plutarch at one point in an extended note: does this imply that the rest of the note is not in fact Plutarchan, or is it a rhetorical device precisely to create that impression, or is it the result of the process of compression which the Proclan scholia have suffered in the course of transmission? Parallels of subject-matter in the Plutarchan corpus can be helpful here, but never of course truly clinching.[16]

Although arguments can be put forward for all options, let us start from the hypothesis that only the first phrase, namely the matter-of-fact "ταῦτα πάντα περὶ τῆς Χαλκίδος <καὶ> τοῦ Ἀμφιδάμαντος καὶ τοῦ ἄθλου καὶ τοῦ τρίποδος ἐμβεβλῆσθαί (...) <ὡς> οὐδὲν ἔχοντα χρηστόν" can be attributed to Plutarch with some certainty. The subsequent, equally factual addition (between brackets) may well confirm this. It could indicate that the latter's author was able to distinguish the original source (the first sentence) from its elaboration (the rest of the scholion). Still other indications, when taken together, argue for attributing the remaining to Proclus. What follows the first statement is in fact a further specification of the key words Χαλκίς, Ἀμφιδάμας, ἆθλον and τρίπους. This would then be Proclus' own interpretation or a reformulation of Plutarch's original commentary. The closing character of "πάντα οὖν ταῦτα ληρώδη λέγων ἐκεῖνος" would finally reinforce this hypothesis which, if correct, exempts the supposedly 'moderate' and 'mild' Plutarch from such provocative terms as "babble" and "nonsense" vis-à-vis his beloved Hesiod.[17]

But, as mentioned above, valid arguments can also be put forward for the other two options: either the scholion is Plutarchan in its entirety and reworked by Proclus, or the first sentence is a summary by Proclus, supplemented by a later scholiast and followed by a further elaboration of his own or pieced together with selected phrases from a larger commentary by Plutarch. It should not be forgotten that the latter was an extremely well-read and erudite intellectual, who –

16. HUNTER 2014, 168.

17. With "supposedly" we hint at the longstanding image of a good , all too good-hearted Plutarch, "der liebenswürdige Bürger von Chaironeia, der uns immer noch in sein gastfreies Haus ladet". (WILAMOWITZ 1926, 278). This resulted in polemical works like Περὶ τῆς Ἡροδότου κακοηθείας / *On the malice of Herodotus* (cf. infra) being mistaken either as Pseudo-Plutarchan or juvenile writings. Today, as will be seen further on, his critical open-mindedness is particularly highlighted. See, among others, HERSHBELL 1993, 143-144.

fortunately for us – loved to display his *polymatheia*. These hypotheses make two questions, already introduced, even more pressing: what source text of Plutarch has provided the space for such a harsh verdict and, why, eventually, did the historian-philosopher formulate his judgement so negatively?

Before tackling both issues, the problematic use of the terms, lexically explained in the above note, has to be examined more closely. The essence of the scholion is that the story of the contest and Hesiod's tripod is an interpolation because it has nothing that is χρηστόν, which implies a *relative* judgement: it is not useful/appropriate *in relation to something or someone (else)*. A review of its possible meanings leads one to conclude that the verses are either against Plutarch's image of Hesiod or lacking whatever justifies their inclusion in *Erga*. In the first case, it would then have been about its usefulness for the reader, in the second about its relevance in relation to seafaring. In this respect, the argument that the passage dates from a later time (...) is entirely acceptable. Being ἄχρηστος, however, is not the same as being ληρώδης, which implies an *absolute* judgement: it is nonsense or twaddle *by itself, as a whole* and *independent of any context.* This, as we shall see, is not consistent with the importance Plutarch attaches to such stories, albeit in a particular perspective.

Furthermore, the reader should be aware of the association by juxtaposition between θρυλοῦσι and ληρώδη. Due to each other's proximity, the Loeb translation above creates the erroneous impression that, in this context, the former automatically means "to babble", which is more or less synonymous of "to twaddle".[18] For the latter, the Greek language has the verb ληρεῖν, used for example by Isocrates where he would gladly want to "silence those who chant their verses and *prate* about these poets [sc. Homer and Hesiod] in the Lyceum – παῦσαι τοὺς ἐν τῷ Λυκείῳ ῥαψῳδοῦντας τἀκείνων καὶ ληροῦντας περὶ αὐτῶν [sc. περὶ δὲ τῆς Ὁμήρου καὶ τῆς Ἡσιόδου]".[19] While "to prate – ληρεῖν" implies "to talk stupidly, or about things that are not important, for a long time", the basic transitive meaning (+ acc.) of θρυλεῖν' is "to repeat over and over again", "to keep talking of" or "to ramble endlessly", whatever the content (cf. the LSJ explanations above). Therefore Stamatopoulou's translation "rehash" is preferable.[20] In sum, "οὐδὲν χρηστόν" relates rather to inappropriateness, "θρυλοῦσι" rather to constant repetition and "ληρώδη" rather to silliness. This differentiation matters in our search for the scholion's possible source text.

18. *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. to babble: "to talk or say something in a quick, confused, excited, or silly way".

19. Isocrates, *Panathenaicus*, 12, 33.

20. STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 537, n. 18 included: "and people rehash [the] inscription on it". Her translation is a modification of Sandbach's.

Plutarch's Hesiod

The harsh tone of the scholion is not invective, but Plutarch's attacks on the historian and, elsewhere, on the Epicurean Colotes or on the Stoics, prove that he can indeed come out more than sharply and edgy. Such choice is, it may be assumed, dictated by context, cause and purpose. In the light of our attempt to evaluate his criticism within the Hesiodic tradition formation and Panhellenic identity formation, our reference is also appropriate as Plutarch takes aim here at two established figures of Greek literature: Herodotus, the "father of history", and Hesiod, of whom Plutarch is said to be "arguably the greatest fan in antiquity".[21] While, in the first case, he takes issue with the author of the *Historiae* and in the second with the text tradition of the *Erga*, i.c. the interpolation , in both cases Plutarch has subordinated this tradition and identity formation to his conviction as either a Greco-Roman historiographer or as a Platonist philosopher and teacher.

These observations allow us to focus more sharply on our question of the source text: has the tone of the scholion been adopted from a work that sets correct historical data as normative or from a work with a moral-educational programme? In the case of Plutarch, two obstacles prevent a satisfactory answer. First, tone is not an appropriate criterion to distinguish Plutarchan writings. As already noted, he does not assume his own rightness, but engages in dialogue with his sources, often in a discussion with fellow-πεπαιδευμένοι. While "there is no shortage of passages where he appears as a critical author displaying a sincere concern for the historical truth", Plutarch "attaches great importance to the plausibility (εἰκότης or πιθανόν) of his account.[22] The same goes for the account of his sources, which presupposes a critical open-mindedness that is difficult to express in an either overly aggressive or overly flattering tone or style. Second, there is the lack of evidence. One theory says that the scholion goes back to a poem by Proclus which, in turn, was indebted to Plutarch's *Life of Hesiod* or his *Commentary on the Works and Days*. The formulations "(ἐμβεβλῆσθαί) φησιν ὁ Πλούταρχος" and "ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄρχεται", may suggest the latter work to the extent that they allude to philological exegetical judgements characteristic of text commentaries. Unfortunately, all three works are lost and the Proclan scholia are themselves marked by "a number of redactions and compressions".[23] Fortunately, *Erga* 650-662 comes up two times in Plutarch's sympotic work, more specifically *Table Talk* and *The Dinner (of the Seven Wise Men)*.[24]

21. KONING 2010, 42 and 186.

22. ROSKAM 2021, 103 and *passim.*

23. For this quote and more details, see HUNTER 2014, 167, including the studies and text editions referenced in nn. 3 and 5.

24. Συμποσιακά/*Quaestionum convivialium* 674f–675b, and Συμπόσιον τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφῶν/*Septem sapientium convivium* 153f–154a.

The first passage is the most interesting in terms of wording. The central question of *Table Talk 5.2 (= Book 5, Question 2)* stems from a discussion at the Pythian Games: are the essentially musical contests still tenable in their current format, as poetry and prose are gaining ground? In the course of a second debate the Plutarchus character defends poetry contests by means of references to the literary tradition. In doing so, he explicitly takes care not to use the precedents his disciples would expect. By way of a *paralipsis*, he nevertheless manages to mention the (all too well-known) contest Hesiod won in Chalcis:

> I made the point that poetry was not a late arrival nor a novelty at the religious festivals, but had in fact received the crown of victory in very ancient times. Some of my friends expected me to cite well-worn examples like the funeral ceremonies of Oeolycus of Thessaly and those of Amphidamas of Chalcis, at which it is said that Homer and Hesiod contended in epic verse. But I scorned all this hackneyed lore of the schoolroom (καταβαλὼν δὲ ταῦτα τῷ **διατεθρυλῆσθαι** πάνθ' ὑπὸ τῶν γραμματικῶν), dismissing also the "speakers" *(rhemones)* in Homer, as read by some for "throwers" *(hemones)* at the funeral of Patroclus, as if Achilles had awarded a prize in speaking in addition to the other prizes. I merely mentioned that even Acastus at the funeral of his father Pelias held a contest of poetry at which the Sibyl won. I was immediately fastened on by many, who demanded my authority for so incredible and paradoxical a statement, etc. (*Table Talk 5.2*, 674f–675b)

Thereupon he challenges his intellectual audience to go and consult the hard-to-find source of Acesander's tale in the archives of the Delphian Treasuries.

The exegetical reason for this extended quotation will become clear at a later stage. For now, the primary focus is on διατεθρυλῆσθαι, the substantivated perfect passive infinitive of διαθρυλεῖν, in the Loeb edition translated as "hackneyed lore". However interpretive – the idea of "lore" is not inherent to the verb's basic meaning – this is a much better rendering than "babble" or "twaddle". After all, this time, the context leaves no doubt that it is not about *nonsense* but about *lack of inspiration and searching spirit*. First, the speaker, who may or may not be the historical Plutarch, explicitly says that he wants to surprise with never-heard trivia, and stresses this by referring to the story of Acastus and the Sibylle. Second, Acastus and his father Pelias are characters in the saga cycle of the Argonauts, Jason and Medea. Are these tales less "babble", then, than those about Oeolycus of Thessaly, Patroclus and Achilles?

The shared use of (δια)θρυλεῖν does not necessarily indicate that the scholion goes back to this passage or that both trace back to a common text source. However, the excerpt from *Table Talk 5.2* reveals two things. First, it introduces us to the open-minded discourse of sympotic conversation discourse from which the scholiast may have derived certain wordings. Further, the reference to Acesander's tale shows that, for both Plutarch the author and Plutarchus, his persona, 'lore' is not synonymous with ληρώδη or 'twaddle'. We insist on the translation of (δια)θρυλεῖν as "to keep talking of" because, in our opinion, it points at Plutarch's

critical attitude towards the formation of tradition, i.c. around Hesiod and his work, and, implicitly, towards the identity formation of his Greco-Roman readership from, among others, their literary past. Whether the verb refers to the epigram or the whole story,[25] he takes the opportunity, be it somewhat pedantically, to lash out at the γραμματικοί (school teachers, scholars, grammarians?) as wretched "tradition-makers".[26] Regurgitating uncritically and/or uninspired the same old repertoire over and over again, they neglect the real (for well-hidden and nearly forgotten) gems of a shared cultural memory.

Against this background, the scholion gives the erroneous impression that Plutarch is athetizing *Erga* 650-662 because he is annoyed by the passing from generation to generation of historically incorrect information or, put another way, a tradition that sells fiction as non-fiction. On the contrary, the second passage will prove that in certain contexts, traditional stories such as the one about the Chalcidian contest and Hesiod's tripod can indeed be χρηστόν or "useful". The only sure thing we can gather from the scholion is that for some reason this contest/tripod tale is felt as irrelevant either for Hesiod's *Erga* as a whole or within its immediate context of the passage.

In *The Dinner* 153f–154a the seven sages and other interlocutors discuss, at some point, the usefulness of posing riddles when final decisions end in a deadlock.[27] After a concerted effort (or *syzetesis*, cf. infra) to answer a set of ten enigmatic questions, Cleodorus expresses his disinterest, arguing that "asking and answering such questions is (only) good for kings". In doing so, he drops the word βάρβαρος (non-Greek).[28] This is a trigger for the tyrant Periander, the host

25. Cf. the translation in STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 534, in which the ἐπίγραμμα is seen as the subject of θρυλοῦσι, with the result that the foregoing is interpreted as the object of an elliptic [They say that...].

26. However, it should be kept in mind that Plutarch shared the disdain towards them among the intellectual elite of the time. ESHLEMAN 2013, 148-149: "As teachers of language and literature, they occupied the pivot point between elementary and higher education. This gave them considerable influence as purveyors of the cultural capital of aristocratic society, especially the arts of correct speech. Yet while grammatical teaching was foundational to elite *paideia*, it was often scorned by members of the educated elite as merely elementary, childish, and banal, boring to everyone but grammarians."

27. FERREIRA 2009, 481: "One of the most striking characteristics of the Banquet is the considerable disparity, in style and content, between the two halves of the text (1-12; 13-21)*. The Sages dominate the first half of the dialogue; the conversation is rapid, consisting of short, sententious opinions, and the topics broached relate to human activity, such as politics and the household. In the second half, however, the non-Sages come to the fore, expounding long speeches on subjects of a more divine and cosmic significance, familiar from Plutarch's other dialogues." *[146b-154f; 155a-164d]

28. The debate in question is centred on a riddle from Amasis, the king of Egypt to Bias of Priene, "the wisest of the Greeks". The king of Ethiopia challenges him "to drink the ocean dry – ἐκπιεῖν τὴν θάλατταν". At stake is the possession of certain cities and towns (*The Dinner*, 151b).

of the gathering, to point out that the Greeks too have a tradition of imposing determining riddles – τοῖς παλαιοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἔθος ἦν – for example at the end of the agon between Hesiod and Homer:

> For we are told that also the most renowned (poets) among the wise men of that time came together in Chalcis for the funeral of Amphidamas. Now Amphidamas was a warrior who had given much trouble to the Eretrians, and had fallen in the battles for the possession of the Lelantine plain. Since the poems that the poets had prepared made the decision difficult and irksome because they were of matching quality, and the renown of the contestants (Homer and Hesiod] made the judges feel helpless and embarrassed, they turned to riddles of the following sort, etc. (*The Dinner*, 153f–154a)[29]

To Periander's example of a useful riddle, Cleodorus counters that, all in all, it does not differ from the famous "conundrums for occasional entertainment" of Eumetis/Cleobulina, daughter of Cleobulus, also present (148d).

In terms of content, a detail pops up here, which also appears in the scholion: the battle against the Eritreans for the Lelantine plain and, above all the fact that Amphidamas fell during the fight. According to Bassino the latter information "is not found anywhere else".[30] This may again point to a common source text but equally well to ready knowledge on the matter, gained through the '(δια)θρυλεῖν' of the story since childhood. (Notice also the implicature: that it is about a poetry competition need not be made explicit; the names of the poets suffice as a hint.). More interesting, however, are the enactment, the impetus and the dynamics of the conversation. They reveal a lot about the use and utility of story-telling in Plutarch's intellectual discourse, c.q. its tradition-formative dimension.

'Sympotic' Hesiod

As regards the enactment and the impetus, *The Dinner* is in itself a carefully constructed story. Limiting ourselves to the prelude to the passage in question, this is evident in the way the proper ambience is created and the initial theme is foreshadowed.[31] For instance, the walk to the location not only builds the necessary suspense, it also gives the opportunity for profiling some of the protagonists. Furthermore, the introduction of Eumetis, well-known for her αἰνίγματα (148c-e), is a clever anticipation of the theme, even before the letter with Amasis' challenge is unsealed. Most relevant to our argumentation, however, is the subtle

29. Thereupon Lesches, one of the contestants, formulates the crucial riddle. More about that storyline in BASSINO 2012.

30. BASSINO 2019, 18, n. 50.

31. *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* is, of course, about much more. For a sketchy overview, see ROSKAM 2021, 44, notes 11 and 12 included.

way in which Plutarch creates situations or exploits the ploys of the symposium to draw on the predominantly ancient Greek, say Panhellenic heritage: views on policy, ethics and morals, philosophical reflections, literary quotes and historical facts, mythological trivia and funny anecdotes… Two examples of such inducements may suffice: Alexidemus' complaint about the table arrangement (148f-149a) and the girls playing flute during the libation (150d-151a). The references to the cultural past come in such quick succession that the reader gets the impression that the frame story *(The Dinner)* is not (only) at the service of Plutarch's Platonic dialectics (via *'the Seven Wise Men'*), but (also) intended to contribute to Greek identity formation by keeping alive a shared tradition.

The hypothesis that Panhellenic identity formation could well be the veiled perspective of this work is reinforced by the Greekness of the seven sages, the extras and the other participants, and by Plutarch's emulation of, among others, Plato's and Xenophon's *exempla*.[32] Either way, the concept fully justifies these and other references to Hesiod,[33] as they contribute to the possible aim attached to this perspective: keeping the Greek tradition alive within Greco-Roman culture. Hesiod is often featured in these, which in itself can be seen as a confirmation of Koning's boutade (cf. supra).[34] Having reviewed those passages, however, Zoe Stamatopoulou comes to the following critical observation:

> Throughout the dialogue, Hesiod is acknowledged and yet marginalized: although recognized as a man of exceptional *sophia* among his contemporaries, his impact on subsequent thinkers is minimized. Ultimately, the didactic poet functions as a foil that brings into relief, defines, and legitimizes the intellectual world of the Seven Sages. – The figure of Hesiod thus facilitates the self-definition of the Sages and their circle as an intellectual elite, a group that has appropriated and surpassed the great authoritative figures of the past in terms of its intellectual pursuits and accomplishments. Hesiod is still useful to many, but Periander's guests are above and beyond his admonition (…) Through the marginalization of Hesiodic wisdom,

32. STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 534, n. 3.

33. Beside that on the contest (153e-154a), the Hesiod passages and references are: 155c-d (about "the best home"), 156d-e (about the consumption of wine), 157e (on food), and 161c-e (about the death of Hesiod and the recovery of his corpse by dolphins).

34. Koning does not substantiate his claim in an single elaborated argumentation but with numerous source references throughout his book. We limit ourselves to Plutarch's extolling of Hesiod in the face of Homer on the one hand and philosophers on the other: the contrasting of "Hesiod's clarity and the blurriness of the other poet (Homer)" (171) in *On the Obsolence of Oracles* 415a-b; the mentioning of "Hesiod's ornament and smoothness" (354) in *Table Talk* 747e; the observation in *Moralia* 402e, 756f and 927e that Hesiod is on a par "with Parmenides, Xenophanes and Empedocles" (191) and even "demonstrates a better understanding than some philosophers" (KONING 2010, 191, n. 5) in *On the Obsolence of Oracles* 433e; and, in *Dialogue on Love* 756f, that he was "more scientific" than Parmenides (198). Finally, referring to Σ WD 130-1, Koning notes that "[n]owhere in antiquity, at least so far as I know, Hesiod is explicitly called a φιλόσοφος" (*Ibid*, 191, n. 5).

> Plutarch circumscribes the advanced intellectual world inhabited by his fictional Thales and his cohort." [35]

This conclusion is in line with the basic idea of *The Dinner* and not against our interpretation that 'lore' can at times be appropriate. It is not clear, however, whether Stamatopoulou sees the sages' self-glorifying use of Hesiod as a deliberate strategy or simply an attitude that follows logically from their profile as top intellectuals. In our opinion, she foregrounds something that threatens to escape the modern reader but is perceived by Plutarch's audience as obvious and evident within the "imaginative account of the dinner",[36] i.e. within the plot of the fictional dialogue. Therefore, we have to resist the temptation to extrapolate Stamatopoulou's argument to other equivalent sympotic works, in which Plutarch shares his reasoning and ideas through one or more interlocutors. In possibly semi-realistic cases like *Table Talk 5.2*,[37] this would imply that Plutarch/Plutarchus (mis)uses the contest story he reviled elsewhere to display his intellectual superiority. Given Plutarch's refined rhetoric, the pedantic way his namesake distils the story in a discussion of the Pythian Games rather feels like self-irony. Within this type of discourse community, the demand for erudition naturally creates an agonistic dynamic and it may be assumed that symposiasts recognize themselves in Plutarch(us)'s playful posturing. More so, taking into account the educational perspective of his sympotic work, his avatar's challenge to search for Acesander's tale in the archives of the Delphian Treasuries can be interpreted as a challenge by the real Plutarch to his Greco-Roman reader-students: I offer you a treasure trove of gradually forgotten traditional material from (y)our glorious Greek past; it is up to you to delve into the ἱστορία (story, account or inquiry, cf. infra) behind them. The brevity of Plutarch's references only increase curiosity, even today. In this view, to dare each other with know-it-alls mainly reflects his ideal of erudition and inquisitiveness to which he aspires us and makes us strive. As Geert Roskam puts it: "There can be no doubt that erudition is one of the most important aspects of Plutarch's thinking and writing. Every passage of his voluminous oeuvre is a feast of *polymatheia*."[38]

The enactment and impetus of Plutarch's *Dinner* has shown how the concept of a symposium offers an ideal format for dwelling upon past and tradition through the exchanging of storylines. The *dynamics* of this exchange, in turn, show how the way of presenting these storylines together with other traditional

35. STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 534 and 555.

36. PLUTARCH, *Moralia*, vol. 3. *Loeb Classical Library* 222, 346.

37. There is a strong biographical connection between Plutarch and Delphi, of which he enjoyed citizenship. He was priest at the oracle and at some point possibly *agonothetes* (four-year mandate to superintend contests) at the Pythian Games. See ROSKAM 2021, 13-14, note 34 included. This gives the discussion a realistic touch, but that does not make *Table Talk 5.2.* some kind of meeting report or conference proceedings.

38. ROSKAM 2021, 60.

material displays a specific pattern and purpose: the solving of a problem by *zetesis*, more precisely *syzetesis*. Roskam describes this as a process of "seeking or searching", whether or not in dialogue with educated men of diverse background, conviction or expertise, or "learned joint inquiry into the truth". The conversation starts from a question which is sufficiently challenging to all. Successive, preferably divergent answers do not lead to a final all-overriding solution, but constitute a "friendly, respectful and open-minded" collaboration in "collecting as many pieces of the puzzle as possible". This essentially Plutarchan practice of *syzetesis* manifests itself pre-eminently in philosophical debates, but also in the treatment of traditional material in *The Dinner:* "The erudition of the sages involved less theoretical sophistication, no doubt, yet the work shows that the germs of convivial *syzetesis* were present from the very beginning."[39]

Transposed to the specific context of *The Dinner*, the mixed interchange of traditional material and historical facts can be seen as more than the joint mapping of inherited, perhaps even identity-defining practices, such as riddling. It can also be interpreted as the collectively puzzling together of a past and tradition which, however fragmented it may have become, must not be lost. In that perspective, the antithesis between 'historical fact' and 'myth and legend' and the difference between knowing and believing taken for granted today,[40] is not at hand in this process. Here, everything is χρηστόν that confirms or reinforces Panhellenic identity within the context of a Greco-Roman world. This also explains Plutarch's receptivity to myth and legend when it comes to another biographical discussion, where the tension between fiction and non-fiction is, it may be assumed, non-existent: Hesiod's posthumous fortunes.

In *The Dinner* 162c-e Aesop narrates how, after his violent death, Hesiod's body was dumped into the sea and carried away by dolphins. This relocation of the corpse would have given rise to the regional dispute (between Boeotia and West-Locris) about the legitimate location of his grave and sanctuary. Remarkably for us but in the line of the debate, Plutarch does not focus on the possible *historical* (i.e., non-fictional) kernel of the legend but on the *fanciful* (i.e. fictional) intervention of the dolphins, their character, and from there, on the credibility c.q. cultural-historical relevance of fantastic λόγοι. Prior to the narration, Aesop already argued that, unlike tales about gods, Hesiod's experiences in this time-honoured story (cf. πλέον ἢ χίλι᾽ ἔτη (162c) – more than thousand years) are not over our heads (ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς) but understandable to us humans (ἀνθρώπινον δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς).[41] Subsequent to the story, the narrator elaborates on the ability of dolphins to help humans in real life and concludes that sharing stories about them is therefore more than justified: "δίκαιός ἐστι περὶ τούτων διελθεῖν" (163a). This remark is, as can be inferred from the masculine δίκαιος, addressed

39. *Ibid*, 22 (first short quotes), 24 (last quote).

40. VEYNE 1983, 8.

41. *The Dinner*, 162c-e, quote: 162c.

to Pittacus as an invitation to tell yet another tale from the Lesbian tradition. In our view, δίκαιος may also have a deictic meaning, suggesting that myth and legend are still valuable, meaningful and, as can be gathered from the commentary, identity-defining for the seven sages and, by extension, all readers concerned with their own culture.[42]

Plutarch's Hesiod and Panhellenic Identity Formation

Without being a distinct theme, the tension between fiction and non-fiction seems to run like a fine thread throughout *The Dinner*.[43] To begin with, the work itself is presented as a story that has not quite been handed down correctly. As may be expected with Plutarch, this inspires the narrator, who promises to give a truthful account of the meeting of the seven wise men, to an initial reflection about precisely the impact of time on the credibility of a story, even when the facts are recent:

> It seems fairly certain, Nicarchus, that the lapse of time will bring about much obscurity and complete uncertainty regarding actual events, if at the present time, in the case of events so fresh and recent, false accounts that have been concocted obtain credence. (*The Dinner*, 146B)

This consideration could be seen as merely a literary procedure to place oneself in the generic tradition (cf. Plato and Xenophon) and to anticipate the tales of the non-sages dominating the second narrative-oriented part. Its basic idea, however, regularly recurs through peripheral comments[44] and, in our opinion, takes shape in the figure of Aesop, whose presence is not evident. As a fabulist, he is, as it were, an intermediary between the philosophizing sage and the narrating non-sages. Indeed, by revealing the deeper truth of reality (non-fiction), his fables (fiction) do indeed "obtain credence". The fable poet therefore cannot resist retaliating playfully in respect of the sages' receptivity to dolphin stories.[45]

---

42. Hereafter, following a digression on the human-like abilities of dolphins and their consequently sacrosanct status in Greek culture, another related story is taken from, as said, the mythological tradition of Lesbos.

43. For this aspect of *The Dinner* as a whole and the *Seven Wise Men* in particular, see FERREIRA 2009.

44. We confine ourselves besides 163a (cf. supra) to following quote from quotes 151f: "It is certain, Diocles, that a good many things come to be believed quite contrary to fact, and most people take delight in fabricating out of their own minds unwarranted tales about wise men, and in readily accepting such tales from others."

45. From 162b: "Well! well!", said Aesop, "you all make fun of my jackdaws and crows if they talk with one another, and yet dolphins indulge in such pranks as this!"

According to Plutarch, ἱστορίαι, as either stories or records of historical research, may include mythical stories, legends and lore under certain preconditions.[46] Jackson P. Hershell distinguishes the following criteria: *aesthetically,* when tales and poetic fictions give "power and charm of elegance" to actions and experiences; *literarily,* when they are "subjected to reason and take on the semblance of history", and, *philosophically,* when earlier inquiries into them "make [one's] own opinions clearer". He derives these conditions from the following passages, among others: "καὶ πλάσμασι καὶ ποιήμασι τοῦ πιστεύεσθαι μὴ προσόντος ἔνεστιν ὅμως τὸ πεῖθον – and the purest fabrications and poetic inventions, to which no belief is accorded, have none the less the winning grace of truth" (*Against Colotes* 1092f), and "λόγῳ τὸ μυθῶδες ὑπακοῦσαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἱστορίας ὄψιν – make [Fable] submit to reason and take on the semblance of History" (*Lives I. Theseus*, 1.3).[47] From what we learned in *The Dinner*, we venture to suggest a fourth, twofold criterium: tradition formation and identity formation.

In our opinion these objectives, these unspoken dynamics in Plutarch's sympotic work also constitute at least one part of the answer to the two remaining questions: why delete Hesiod's contest story in *Erga* and quote it twice in a sympotic work? Just by stating that an educated man (πεπαιδευμένος) is allowed (δίκαιός) to tell stories, Plutarch makes it clear that, in addition to the non-fiction of historical facts, the fiction of handed-down beliefs is, as already said, χρηστόν (appropriate) in some cases. More specifically, the fact that they are part of sympotic *zetesis* shows that, just like the lore about dolphins, the narrative behind the Hesiod cult has some value as well. It is therefore unlikely that Plutarch would have simply dismissed the tradition around Hesiod's contest as nonsense on the basis of the age difference with Homer or the improbability of the epigram on what may have been at most a replica of the tripod trophy.[48] As for *Erga* 650-662, that may not even have been an underlying reason for the *athetesis*, as these historical anomalies do not appear in the passage. As we have already suggested, "οὐδὲν ἔχοντα χρηστόν" must have to do with the specificity of the immediate context, the concept of *Erga* as a whole, Plutarch's appreciation of Hesiod, or all three.

The most obvious motive for the athetization is that the contest/tripod story contributes nothing to the instruction on seafaring, started in vv. 646-649 and continued in vv 663-693. In this respect, "οὐδὲν χρηστόν – nothing useful" is consistent with Plutarch's "utilitarian attitude towards literature", as Roskam calls it.[49] In a Platonic spirit, he is always also concerned with "How the young man should study/listen to poetry – Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν", as

46. This topic is strongly thematized in the prologue to *Life of Theseus and Romulus*, see most recently: ROSKAM 2023 (with further literature).

47. HERSHBELL 1997, 230.

48. About the fact-oriented view on the matter of the Wilamowitz school, see STAMATOPOULOU 2014, 537-538, n. 20 included, and HUNTER 2014, 186-187, n. 44 included.

49. ROSKAM 2021, 56 (quote) – 58.

the title of one of his treatises reads. However, since his philosophical criteria to guide the reading youth are basically ethical and there is nothing immoral about the interpolation, it could be questioned whether Plutarch was insisting on rejecting these verses at all. After all, Proclus' choice of words is different from that in comparable scholia. Whereas elsewhere Proclus states unequivocally that "ὁ Πλούταρχος (…) διαγράφει – erases" or "ἐκβάλλει – deletes" certain verses,[50] the message here sounds more reserved: Plutarch *says* that the contest/tripod story *was inserted* (ἐμβεβλῆσθαί), and that he is ignoring it in this context (ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄρχεται). If there is more to this not-so-categorical formulation, then Plutarch may have appreciated the passage in itself as an uplifting piece of Hesiodic tradition sneaked into an established didactic poem, but out of place among instructions on seafaring.

We could easily stick to this utilitarian justification, were it not for visions that also seek answers outside the immediate context. Aurelio Pérez Jiménez examined Plutarch's philosophical criticism of Hesiod. He thereby points at two other athetizations (*Erga* 267-273 and 757-759), which are based on moral-educational objections. The first passage is about Hesiod going against his own glorification of Dike; in the second (about urinating in a river), the vulgarity is felt unworthy of the Muses' didactic function.[51] Richard Hunter's approach is along the same ethical lines: the fact that Hesiod, without any training or effort, gets his verses whispered by the Muses, makes the passage inappropriate on moral-educational grounds. The reason reads as follows:

> The denial of any sound basis for education, the idea that one needed no special skill or experience to teach a craft, would have been deeply inimical to Plutarch's Platonising convictions; 'the Muses taught me' (v. 662) may, in other contexts, have served as a poetic way of saying "I have been educated" or "I have read in books", but that clearly was not good enough for Plutarch, for it undermined the "didactic" value of the subsequent advice, particularly when seen against the general background of his defence of Hesiod's sound knowledge.[52]

Our view is more in line with a consequence Hunter attaches to this reasoning: Plutarch does not want "his" Hesiod to be associated with the "[ignorant] poets and rhapsodes most famously set out in Plato's Ion". Perhaps the moralist also considered Hesiod's boasting of victory beneath the dignity of an *aoidos* chosen by the Muses. Whatever the case, we already pointed out Plutarch's affection for the poet of *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, so the *Erga* passage may have been sensed as contrary to the profile he wanted to create of Hesiod. The question of whether

50. Schol. Hesiod *WD* 757-759, and Schol. Hesiod *WD* 353-354.

51. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2011, 221.

52. HUNTER 2014, 187. He thus problematizes in particular the last verse of Plutarch's full athetesis: "Μοῦσαι γάρ μ᾽ ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν – for the Muses taught me to sing an inconceivable poem".

regional chauvinism is at play, we defer for a moment. For now, the fact that Hesiod appears fifteen times in *The Dinner* as opposed to Homer's eight times, surely indicates a conscious or unconscious urge to reinforce the tradition of Hesiod as a founding father of Panhellenic culture.[53] Hence our second question: from which viewpoint does Plutarch refer to that supposedly discredited *Erga* passage in *Table Talk* and *The Dinner*? From what has been written about Plutarch's dealings with (Hesiodic) tradition, three possible answers come to mind: *paideia*, ethics and patriotism. We already pointed out possible traces of identity formation in Plutarch's sympotic work, the all-Greek character of *The Dinner* in particular. From that perspective, it will now become clear why identity formation should be added to the list.

In the end, Hunter's motivation of Plutarch's athetizing is the idea(l) of education *(paideia)* towards erudition *(polymatheia).* This point-of-view is most evident from the smart ass manner in which the Plutarchus character introduces the contest story in *Table Talk 5.2*. This is corroborated by the following passage in *The Dinner* about the preparation and purpose of a symposium: just like a lady elaborately prepares for the occasion, the "man of sense – ὁ νοῦν ἔχων" must search for "the fitting adornment for character – ἤθει τὸν πρέποντα κόσμον". He should prepare himself well in terms of content, i.e. by thinking up issues appropriate for a particular gathering. Further, during the conversation, he should not be out "to fill himself up as though he were a sort of pot, but to take some part, be it serious or humorous, and to listen and to talk regarding this or that topic as the occasion suggests it to the company, if their association together is to be pleasant".[54]

Paideia, *polymatheia* and *syzetesis* are indeed explicit goals of an intellectual symposium, but they say nothing about what is implicitly aimed at, nor about the role of Hesiod in reaching these goals. One such implicit motivation can be found – once again – in Plutarch's "moral approach of literature", a view which Roskam grounds as follows:

> In so many of his works, Plutarch time and again emphasizes the importance of virtue, moral progress, a good and harmonious disposition, which are in his view the necessary conditions for happiness and the good life.[55]

53. In the Greco-Roman reality of Plutarch's time, "Panhellenic" not only refers to the unity-in-diversity of all Greek regions, but also to the shared Greek identity that must, through self-assertion, hold its own within a Romanized world. About the latter see, for instance, STADTER 2013, 20-21, on Delphi and Rome. About the shifting criteria of Greek identity formation throughout national history, ancient (and modern), see PAPANIKOS 2024, in particular the shift from the criterion "common origin" towards that of "education, learning and virtue" (pp. 12sqq.).

54. *The Dinner*, 147e-f.

55. ROSKAM 2017, 161 and 164.

This certainly helps to better understand the athetizing of several passages in *Erga*, cited above, but is *prima facie* less relevant to the contest story as such. Our full quotation, however, is motivated by Roskam's argument being partly directed against the thesis that patriotism was also an implicit motivation behind works that, in our view, show a penchant for identity formation. The patriotism thesis crops up in particular with regard to *On the Malice of Herodotus* especially where Plutarch feels obliged to "stand up for the cause of my ancestors and the cause of truth, since his principal victims are the Boeotians and the Corinthians, though he spares no one".[56] This refers to *Histories* 9.15-17, where Herodotus elaborates on the fact that Thebes and other Boeotian cities sided with the Persians. Born in Chaeronea nearby Thebes, Plutarch has shown such local pride throughout his life.[57] Hence the popular thesis that patriotism incited his attack on the historian. For Roskam, however, *On the Malice* is characterized by an "awkward tension" between this patriotic spirit and "the moral reading of literature (…) typical of Plutarch, i.e. the examination of the "complex relation between the author's style, his character, and the content of his work".[58] Ultimately, this approach comes down to the conclusion that the treatment of Boeotians and Corinthians in *Histories* should be evaluated primarily as a manifestation of Herodotus' malicious character.

Lamberton considers Plutarch's commentary on the *Works and Days* "an act of piety for his native Boeotia" and is convinced that *On the Malice of Herodotus* "served the same function".[59] If so, both options (patriotism and "ethical-utilitarian approach towards literature") are perhaps also applicable to the alleged tension between the Plutarch of *Table Talk* and *The Dinner*, and the Plutarch of Proclus' scholion. He would thus have found the contest story χρηστόν for helping to keep alive the immaterial heritage of his beloved Boeotia, yet ἄχρηστον in the direct context of seafaring.[60]

In our view identity formation forms a perspective behind all three possible motives (*paideia*, ethics and patriotism). Roskam is reluctant to accept this idea, but this need not compromised his thesis that, like in most of Plutarch's work, ethics are at the centre.[61] Conversely, identity formation does not necessarily have to be a topic or part of a programme. Here, as probably elsewhere, it operates in

---

56. *On the Malice of Herodotus*, 854f: "μάλιστα πρός τε Βοιωτοὺς καὶ Κορινθίους κέχρηται μηδὲ τῶν ἄλλων τινὸς ἀπεσχημένος, οἶμαι προσήκειν ἡμῖν, ἀμυνομένοις ὑπὲρ τῶν προγόνων ἅμα καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας."

57. ROSKAM 2017, 167.

58. *Ibid*, 168, 166 and 163.

59. LAMBERTON 1988, 291; ROSKAM 2021, 57.

60. *Theseus*, 3: "Ἦν δὲ τῆς σοφίας ἐκείνης τοιαύτη τις, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἰδέα καὶ δύναμις, οἵᾳ χρησάμενος Ἡσίοδος εὐδοκίμει μάλιστα περὶ τὰς ἐν τοῖς Ἔργοις γνωμολογίας – Now the wisdom of that day had some such form and force as that for which Hesiod was famous, especially in the sententious maxims of his 'Works and Days'."

61. ROSKAM 2017, 166, and ROSKAM 2021, 62sqq.

the background, half-consciously, half-unconsciously. The whole discussion concerning (the story in) *Erga* 650-662 may be conducted from the same point of view. For Plutarch the contest/tripod/epigram lore has no place among instructions in relation to archaic maritime practices, but it certainly does within the narrative tradition that keeps alive the memory of a shared past.

All of this leads to our concluding question is: why do myth, lore and fiction altogether manage to hold their own so strongly against the increasing importance of realism and objectivity in the contemporary *paideia*? In our view, sympotic works like *The Dinner* are more than a celebration of this shared past. Their wealth of traditional, mostly narrative material suggestively highlights that this past, with Hesiod as one of the most significant figures, must not be forgotten if the Panhellenic identity is to hold its own in a romanized world. According to Rebecca Preston, the construction of Greek identity at the time is no longer seen today in a pro- or anti-Roman perspective. For Plutarch, this was a major aspect of the *paideia*, which can be understood as "both the formal education of the elite and the wider culture shared by the Greek local elites", concentrated, among others, on "the Greek past in their literary texts and their cultural activities".[62]

Thus, one possible answer to our question is that, within the Greco-Roman context of the time, Greek tradition formation simultaneously implied Greek identity formation. As a unity-in-diversity, the Panhellenic culture was increasingly at risk of either fading or being romanized. And, when identity is at stake, a culture places collective belief over individual knowledge. In *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths*, the French classical historian Paul Veyne thereto observes that, for his ancient predecessors, the antithesis between myth and reality, fiction and non-fiction, was not in question: "The ancient historian believes first; his doubts are reserved for details he can no longer believe."[63]

Conclusion

When seen in the perspective of Hesiodic tradition formation and Panhellenic identity formation, there is no contradiction in Plutarch's use of the contest/tripod story in his sympotic work and his athetizing of the corresponding *Erga*-passage in the Proclan scholion. By philological means and discourse analysis, we gathered that the philosopher did not consider the story as such to be "nonsense" but rather out of place in that specific context. On the contrary, in *Table Talk* and *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*, along with so much other traditional material, the tale contributes to the perpetuation of Hesiod's memory. Besides the specific role in each of these works and Plutarch's personal (didactic, moral and patriotic)

62. PRESTON 2001, Chapter 3 "Roman Questions, Greek answers: Plutarch and the construction of identity", 89 and 90.

63. VEYNE 1983, 8.

motives, we also suspect a conscious or unconscious pursuit of Panhellenic identity formation within a Greco-Roman context. Fiction (myth and legend) and non-fiction (historical inquiry) did not stand in each other's way in the process. Identity as piety towards the past and its "*tra*-dition" (the way the past was passed down), *mythos* and *logos* blended seamlessly into "eternal truths that are our own". Veyne concludes that there is not much difference between Greek perceptions of the past in the second century CE and the fifth century BC. What he writes about these "old historians" also applies *mutatis mutandis* to Plutarch:

> [They] did not, as our folklorists do, collect local traditions they did not believe, nor did they refrain from condemning them out of respect for foreign beliefs: they considered them to be truths, but truths that belonged to them no more than to anyone else. They belonged to the people of the country, for the natives are the best placed to know the truth about themselves (…).[64]

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Professor Dr. Geert Roskam (University of Leuven) for his valuable criticism and inspiring suggestions.

Bibliography

Bassino, P. "Lesches and the contest between Homer and Hesiod." *Kyklos* 1 (2012). Available at: https://classics-at.chs.harvard.edu/lesches-and-the-contest-between-homer-and-hesi od/.

____. *The 'Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi': A Commentary*. Berlin and Boston, 2019.

Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/.

Eshleman, K. "Then Our Symposium Becomes a Grammar School: Grammarians in Plutarch's Table Talks." *Syllecta Classica* 24 (2013): 145-171.

Graziosi, B. *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic*. Cambridge 2002.

Herman, W. E. "Identity Formation." In S. Goldstein and J. A. Naglieri (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*. Boston, 2011.

Hershbell, J. P. "Plutarch and Herodotus: The Beetle in the Rose." *Rheinisches Museum* 136, no. 2 (1993): 143-163.

____. "Plutarch's Concept of History: Philosophy from Examples." *Ancient Society* 28 (1997): 225-243.

Hunter, R. L. *Hesiodic Voices: Studies in the Ancient Reception of Hesiod's 'Works and Days'*. Cambridge and New York, 2014.

Koning, H. *Hesiod: The Other Poet: Ancient Reception of a Cultural Icon*. Leiden and Boston 2010.

Lamberton, R. "Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiai." *Illinois Classical Studies* 13, no. 2 (1988): 491-504.

64. VEYNE 1983, 123 and 97.

Lawrence, K. "Historical Fiction, Brachylogy, and Plutarch's Banquet of the Seven Sages." in J. R. Ferreira, D. Leão, P. Dias and M. Tröster (eds.), *Symposion and Philanthropia in Plutarch*. Coimbra, 2009, 481-95.

Liddell, Scott, Jones. *Ancient Greek Lexicon (LSJ)*. Available at: https://lsj.gr/wiki/Main_Page.

Nagy, G. "Hesiod and the Ancient Biographical Traditions." In F. Montanari, C. Tsagalis and A. Rengatos (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Hesiod*. Leiden and Boston, 2009, 271-311.

Papanikos, G. T. "The National Identity of Ancient and Modern Greeks." *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 2024 (forthcoming). https://www.athensjournals.gr/mediterranean/Papanikos(2023)-Greeks.pdf.

Pérez Jiménez, A. "Οὐ καθ'Ἡσίοδον: Posiciones Críticas de Plutarco ante el Poeta de Ascra." In A. Pérez Jiménez and F.C. Secall (eds.), *Δῶρον Μνημοσύνης: Miscelánea de estudios ofreridos a Ma Ángeles Durán Lopez*. Zaragoza, 2011, 221-232.

Pertusi, A. *Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies*. Milano, 1955.

Preston, R. *Being Greek under Rome*. Cambridge, 2001.

Roskam, G. "Discussing the Past: Moral Virtue, Truth, and Benevolence in Plutarch's On the Malice of Herodotus." In A. Georgiadou and K. Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Space, Time and Language*. Berlin and Boston 2017, 161-174.

____. *Plutarch*. Cambridge and New York, 2021.

____. "Plutarch's demiurgic moralism in his Theseus-Romulus." *Acta Classica* 66 (2023) (forthcoming).

Scodel, R. *Hesiod*. Oxford Bibliographies, 2009. Available at: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0019.xml.

Stadter, P. A. "Plutarch and Rome." In M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 13-31.

Stamatopoulou, Z. "Hesiodic Poetry and Wisdom in Plutarch's 'Symposium of the Seven Sages.'" *The American Journal of Philology* 135, no. 4 (2014): 533-558.

Veyne, P. *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*. Translated by P. Wissing. Chicago and London, 1983.

West, M. *Hesiod, Works & Days*. Oxford, 1978.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von. "Plutarch als Biograph." In *Reden und Vorträge* 2, 247-279. Berlin, 1926.

Athens Journal of History - Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2024 – Pages 65-86

Kleomenes I of Sparta: A Proto-Biography

By Oliver R. Baker[*]

[Hdt. 3.148.1–2, 5.39.2, 5.40.2, 5.41.1–3, 5.42.1, 5.49.2–3, 5.49.8–9, 5.50.1–3, 5.72.3–4, 6.48.1–2, 6.49.1–2, 6.50.1–3, 6.66.1–3, 6.73.1–2, 6.75.1–3, 6.84.1–3, 7.204, 8.131.2]

Claims that Herodotus reveals himself as a proto-biographer are not yet widely accepted. To advance this claim, I review his recount of Kleomenes of Sparta (c. 540–c. 490), who finds his kingdom caught in the periphery of the Greco-Persian conflict, and whose activities over a thirty-year reign are recorded in the Histories*. It is to Heraclitus to whom we attribute the maxim—character is human destiny. It is the truth of this maxim—which implies effective human agency—that makes Herodotus' creation of historical narrative possible. He is often read for his off-topic vignettes, which color-in the character of the individuals depicted without necessarily advancing his narrative. But by leapfrogging through five of the nine books of the Histories, we can assemble a largely continuous narrative for this remarkable Spartan ruler. This narrative permits us to attribute both credit and moral responsibility for his actions. Arguably, this implied causation demonstrates that Herodotus' writings include much that amounts to proto-biography.*

Proto-Biography

Herodotus has long been recognised as the first Western historian, but his *Histories* are also read for his lively biographic anecdotes and character vignettes. Although Herodotus writes history, many of his anecdotes do not extend his historical narrative at all, and when not an outright digression often color-in something of the character and values of selected notable individuals. He selects short, seemingly off-topic *stories* about the deeds, and conduct or misconduct of his heroines and heroes that eloquently reveal much about their character, but which seemingly without judgement often also provide what might become a *defining moment* for each individual.

Just as Homer and Hesiod stand at a crossroads where oral myth is set down in writing, Herodotus stands at another crossroads a few hundred years later where selected stories about great heroines, heroes, and scurrilous hounds are taken out of the oral tradition and set down in writing. Albeit writing prose rather than epic poetry, Herodotus regards himself as a contemporary Homer, but also as a storyteller with the ability to assign credit and with it, moral responsibility.[1]

*Tutor-Marker, Simon Fraser University, Canada.

1. Re-discovered in 1994 on the harbour wall of Halicarnassus, the modern Aegean resort of Bodrum in Turkey, the *Salmakis Inscription*, possibly early second century, describes Herodotus as (Ἡρόδοτον τὸν πεζὸν ἐν ἱστορίασιν Ὅμηρον ἤροσεν,) *Hêródoton ton pezon*

It is to Herodotus' near-contemporary, Heraclitus, to whom we attribute the maxim (ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων) "*êthos anthropôi daimôn*" translations for which include the commonplace *character is destiny*.[2] Neither *êthos* nor *daimôn* are easily translated, and *anthropôi* is often ignored. But the maxim is senseless if any part of it depends on powers outside of the individual.[3] It is the truth of this maxim—which presupposes effective human agency—that makes the creation of historical narrative, rather than divine myth or heroic epic, even possible. [4] Hesiod, Homer, and to a certain extent Plutarch many centuries later, want to argue that it is primarily ancestry or pedigree that will determine destiny. Undeniably in the fifth century the well-born will often have much greater autonomy, authority, and agency than ordinary folk.

Claims that Herodotus reveals himself as a proto-biographer are not yet widely accepted. In an article lamenting the gap between Herodotus and Xenophon—Helene Homeyer makes the claim that Herodotus is also the father of biography.[5] To advance this claim, I have selected one exceptional individual, Kleomenes, Agiad dyarch of Sparta. An individual, who participated in the Helleno-Persian Wars, but one not found among those notables recognised by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*.[6] By leapfrogging through five of the nine books of Herodotus' *Histories*, even if the entries fall short of a cradle to grave depiction, we can assemble a reasonably continuous narrative for Kleomenes, and thus

---

en historiasin Homêron êrosen, "[Halicarnassus] engendered Herodotus, the prose Homer of history" Signe Isager, "The Pride of Halikarnassos," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie*, 123 (January 1998): 7-8; and, Jessica Priestley, *Herodotus and Hellenic Culture*, (Oxford, 2014), 187.

2. See Andre Laks and Glenn W. Most, *Early Ionian Thinkers*, 194-195; also see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 210-212, and Marcovich 500-504 for a brief discussion of what this enigmatic phrase with its syntactic ambiguity might have meant to Herodotus and his contemporaries in the middle of the fifth century. Does *anthropôi* attach to *êthos* or to *daimôn*? Do we write, "For the character of man is the destiny of man" Curd and Graham 179—or is *anthropô*i redundant?

3. See Miroslav Markovich, *Heraclitus: Greek Text*, (Mérida, Venezuela, 1967), 202.

4. Heraclitus of Ephesus, a near contemporary of Herodotus, and one of the Presocratic philosophers, was active in the late sixth- and early fifth-centuries shortly before Herodotus was born. We have no evidence either way about Herodotus' familiarity with Heraclitus' works, but their notions of human causality or agency concur.

5. Helen Homeyer writes, "So ist Herodot nicht nur der Vater der Geschichte, sondern zugleich auch der Schöpfer eines Zweiges der biographischen Darstallungsweise geworden, die bis zu Plutarch reicht." This can be roughly translated as "So Herodotus is not only the father of history, but also the creator of a branch of biographical representation which extends up to Plutarch" Helene Homeyer "Zu den Aufängen der Griechischen Biographie" *Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption* 106 (1962): 81.

6. Herodotus gives his only cradle to grave narrative in book 1 which among other historical matters covers all of Cyrus the Great's life, but this may well be happenstance rather than design.

through his exploits, gauge his character against the epic heroines and heroes described by Homer.[7] Emulating Tomas Hägg, I let Herodotus speak for himself through long in-text quotations from the 2007 Purvis translation.[8]

Late Sixth-Century Sparta

Herodotus gives us part of the life story of only one ruler of Sparta, but even these fascinating, chronologically isolated, stand-alone episodes about Kleomenes I are scattered over three books of his *Histories*.[9] Neither wealthy nor populous, this Peloponnese kingdom's importance late in the sixth and early in the fifth century is determined entirely by its geography. Not landlocked, it has direct access to the sea through the Gulf of Laconia, and hence the intense interest of the Persian ruler, Darius.

Kleomenes I, the late sixth- and early fifth-century Agiad king of Sparta, and arguably the architect of the Peloponnesian League, is not among the Greek luminaries Plutarch selects for comparison with notable Romans in his *Parallel Lives*. We can only speculate on his reasoning for this omission—the simplest explanation, Occam's razor, is that he did not have in mind any particularly notable Romans with whom he could make an intriguing comparison.[10] Yet of all the noble and notable Greeks Herodotus mentions in his *Histories*—barring Kleomenes' childhood, his marriage, whether along with his three half-brothers he undergoes the rigors of the *Agoge* from age seven to twenty, and other necessary endurance trials before being nominated as King Anaxandridas II's successor—he gives us a more or less complete portrait of Kleomenes' ruling life.

---

7. In this respect Kleomenes I is not unique. By a similar leapfrogging exercise we can paint pictures of a number of individuals ignored by Plutarch: Artemisia, Gorgo, Atossa, Alexander I, Miltiades the Elder, Miltiades the Younger, and many others.

8. Tomas Hägg comments, "The idea that [someone] knows the texts sufficiently well in advance, or has them at hand to consult continuously is a pious illusion: it is better to bring the texts physically into the discussion" Tomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography* (Cambridge, 2012), ix. The block quotations from Herodotus are from the Andrea L Purvis translation found in Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Herodotus*, (New York, 2007).

9. Referring to the works of a contemporary of Herodotus, Anne Geddes comments, "In a literate world, biography attempts to provide a broad understanding of the experience of a lifetime; literacy is a prerequisite for true biography. In an oral society, biography can hardly amount to anything more than anecdote, which had the potential to reveal and interpret character, but is likely to be trivial in content and designed for entertainment or for pointing a moral." Anne Geddes, "Ion of Chios and Politics" in *The World of Ion of Chios*, 114-115.

10. If his account of Kleomenes I has not been lost, this lack also falls under Occam's razor—however under the logic of Occam's broom, Plutarch may have had access to any number of no longer extant but unflattering or maddeningly contradictory accounts of Kleomenes' long rule.

Alas, absent any information about his youth, for that *one character-defining moment*, we must wait until after he is enthroned; doubtless Sparta's Council of Elders is much more dutiful and much less patient about this critical character evaluation—their kingdom's stability depends on it. The battlefield is no place for the physically or mentally impaired, let alone cowards. A detailed discussion of governance in late sixth- and early fifth-century Sparta is beyond the scope of this study. The intricacies may well not have been fully understood by Herodotus. Much of what twenty-first century scholars contend is based on *Plutarch's Lives*, and notably even Plutarch, hedging his bets, introduces his discussion of this legendary king as follows:

> Concerning Lycurgus the lawgiver, in general, nothing can be said which is not disputed, since indeed there are different accounts of his birth, his travels, his death, and above all, of his work as law-maker and statesman; and there is least agreement among historians as to the times in which the man lived (Plu. *Lycurgus*, I. i).

In fact, among the twenty-three pairs of notable individuals and four stand-alone biographical accounts—fifty in all, but with possibly an unknown number lost—Plutarch examines no women and only five Spartans, including the quasi-legendary late ninth-century Lycurgus and the late third-century Agiad ruler Kleomenes III.

Kleomenes' Eary Life

Herodotus' first mention of Kleomenes is dated to about the year 517 where very early in his long reign he is described as "the most just of men" (Hdt. 3.148.2). But beyond sketchy details of his birth-mother, we know nothing about his early childhood, let alone anything about his adolescence, nor how old he was when selected for the Agiad kingship.[11] And, as is usual with Herodotus, we also know nothing about his physical appearance; but if it was remarkable he might

11. Divine descent—the Heraclid myth— constitutes the Spartan kings' entire claim to legitimacy. The double kingship is attributed to a Delphic oracle. While honouring the first born, it assigns joint rule to Eurysthenes and Procles, the twin sons of Argeia by Aristodemus, the great-great-grandson of Heracles. Their sons, Agis and Eurypon, in turn, become the eponymous ancestors of the two royal houses. Because Agis' father Eurysthenes is determined to be the elder of the twins, this gives justification for the Agiad line of succession holding ascendency over the Eurypontid line (Hdt 6.52). As descendents of Heracles, the kings are strictly Achaeans and not Dorians, a distinction Kleomenes will claim at least once during his rule (Hdt. 5.72.3–4). The direct Homeric allusion will not be lost on Herodotus' audiences.

have mentioned something.[12] Of course, if he is following Heraclitus' maxim his focus will be on character not on stature, posture, or physiognomy. But following Hesiod and Homer he will also detail his Agiad genealogy or pedigree. Indeed, Herodotus gives his readers a detailed account of how Anaxandridas II the son of Leon, who ruled Sparta from about 560 to 520, is manoeuvred by the ephors and gerontes into bigamously ensuring the Agiad line of succession.

Anaxandridas is happily married to his niece—his sister's daughter—and although he has absolutely no wish to divorce her—they are childless and hence the problem. Herodotus does not indicate how soon into his reign this succession concern arises, perhaps within as little as ten years of marriage. Nor does he reveal how it is that the ephors and gerontes are so certain that the infertility problem does not lie with Anaxandridas. That particular deficiency, if known, would have been an absolute bar to his selection to the Spartan kingship and so it is likely that any concern on those grounds is snuffed long before Anaxandridas assumes the Agiad throne.[13] Herodotus recounts:

> Because of this situation, the ephors summoned him and said, "Even if you are not thinking of your future, we ourselves cannot look on and allow the line of Eurysthenes to die out. You do have a wife already, but since she has not given birth, divorce her now and marry another. By doing this you will please the Spartans." Anaxandridas replied that he would do neither of these things, and that they had given him bad advice in telling him to throw away the wife he now had, who was faultless in his eyes, and to marry another. No, he said, he would not obey them (Hdt. 5.39.2).

This brings up again a somewhat contested aspect of governance in late sixth-and early fifth-century Sparta; neither of the dyarchs is an absolute ruler—far from it, although the details of how this all works out over time are still vigorously disputed by scholars (see Hdt. 6.51–60). Much of what we believe we know about the governance of late sixth- and early fifth-century Sparta comes from *Plutarch's Lives* (Lycurgus) which was written some six centuries later. There is a five-member Board of Ephors elected annually by the Assembly, and a thirty-member Council of Elders—the *Gerousia*—comprising the two kings plus twenty-eight men aged over sixty, but elected for life, again by the Assembly. The Assembly (*Ekklesia*) consists of all male Spartan citizens who will certainly vote on

12. Unlike Plutarch, and Homer for that matter, evidently Herodotus has almost no interest in the physical appearance of any of the individuals he mentions in his *Histories*.

13. In this instance Helot maiden honour will remain untarnished. Sparta will have bevies of widows and aristocratic wives with young healthy children, who will partake in this critical royal function, whereas their adolescent heir apparent will be introduced to heterosexual intercourse under the guise that frequent liaisons are necessary for conception. Pomeroy discusses the mutually consenting, but not-quite-adulterous "open" triangular arrangements which are deemed entirely acceptable in Spartan society (*Goddesses, Whores* 37).

important matters such as peace or war.[14] A king continually at odds with several of his ephors only has to wait a year for the blockage to clear—but slipping something really important past his co-monarch, the Board, the *Gerousia*, and the Assembly is well nigh impossible—checks and balances indeed.

Anxious to break the impasse with their Agiad king, the ephors discuss the matter with the Council of Elders and offer the king a bigamous compromise (Hdt. 5.40.1):

> "We no longer ask that you divorce your present wife; continue providing all that you now provide for her. But marry another wife in addition, one who can give you children." To this Anaxandridas agreed, and afterward he had two wives and maintained two separate hearths, a practice that was not at all customary for a Spartan (Hdt. 5.40.2).

Always the first and about the only indisputable duty of any hereditary monarch anywhere and at any time is Darwinian in simplicity—ensure the succession. Showing just how far the Spartan dyarchs are from being absolute monarchs, Anaxandridas II dutifully complies. The detail about maintaining two separate households reminds Herodotus' readers that the Spartans do not build luxurious palaces for their dyarchs, that polygamy is a barbarian anathema, and that Anaxandridas does not expect the two wives or their respective offspring to live under the same roof.[15] Nevertheless, demonstrating that the gods move in mysterious ways, a surprise is in store for the ephors.

> Not much time passed before the new wife [name never given] subsequently gave birth to Kleomenes. But now just as she was showing off to the Spartans the heir to the throne that she had produced, by some coincidence the first wife [name never given], though childless before, became pregnant. [2] And although she was truly pregnant, the relatives of the new wife, when they heard about it, made things difficult for her, claiming that she was just making an empty boast, and that she intended to substitute another child and pretend it was her son. They expressed their indignation in that way, and when her time drew near, the ephors, who were suspicious, took seats around the woman to guard her as she gave birth. [3] And she did give birth to Dorieus, and then at once conceived Leonidas, and immediately after he was born, she conceived Kleombrotus. Some say that Kleombrotus and Leonidas were actually twins. The second wife, who had borne Kleomenes never gave birth to another child (Hdt. 5.41.1–3).

14. See Cartledge 2002, 45-46.

15. Herodotus' audience will immediately see the contrast between this Hellenic compromise and the barbarian practice of multiple wives and concubines, vast royal palaces in multiple capitals, and perhaps prodigious numbers of royal but illegitimate offspring.

There could be any number of reasons, beyond the obvious, why Kleomenes should remain an only child. But the dark cloud over his birth, which the Council of Elders created and remained powerless to dispel, does not fade with time.

Disputed Succession

And demonstrating that no good deed, let alone such an ill-conceived one, should ever go unpunished, the net result is a bitterly disputed succession and dissention. When Anaxandridas II dies in about 520 the Spartans nominate this eldest son—Kleomenes—to the kingship (Hdt. 5.42.2).[16] Dorieus, the eldest son by the late king's first wife, pig-headedly perhaps, refuses to accept this decision and goes into self-exile dying in battle trying to establish his own Spartan kingdom in Italy, perhaps in Croton or possibly Sybaris. Herodotus writes:

> Because Kleomenes, it is said, was not right in his mind and lived on the verge of madness, Dorieus, who was the leading youth among his peers, assumed that he would obtain the kingship by virtue of his manly excellence" (Hdt. 5.42.1).

But was this true back in 520?[17] This matter is still bitterly disputed by scholars, but the evidence is thin.[18] Scholars must be honest about knowing what they do not know and may never know. From Herodotus' account, neither of Dorieus' younger half-brothers, Leonidas nor Kleombrotus, disputes the succession. In fifth-century Sparta, the interests of the state always trump personal ambition. Although Herodotus never gives us the full genealogy of Kleomenes I, son of Anaxandridas, he gives one for his younger half-brother Leonidas I, which is of course identical since birth-mothers are ignored in the tabulation:

> Leonidas son of Anaxandridas, the son of Leon son of Eurykratides, the son of Anaxandros son of Eurykrates, the son of Polydoros son of Alkamenes, the son of Teleklos son of Archelaos, the son of Hrgesilaos son of Doryssos, the son of Leobotas son of Echestratos, the son of Agis son of Eurysthenes, the son of Aristodemos son of

16. This expression "the Spartans" which occurs frequently when Herodotus refers to decisions emanating from Sparta likely means the Assembly. We can surmise that from time to time the kings together with the elders and ephors put their recommendation(s) to the Assembly—with or without discussion—for ratification by a simple *yea* or *nay* voice vote (*viva voce*).

17. The two crucial words from the Greek translated here are *phreneres* and *acromanes*. The first literally means "master of his mind," the second "on the verge of madness." Neither expression is common for this period.

18. In view of Hdt. 6.75.1–2, where Herodotus writes that in 491 Kleomenes was "stricken by madness" and Hdt. 6.84 where he writes that Kleomenes "went mad" perhaps from strong drink. The simplest explanation—Occam's Razor, if not Occam's Broom—is that some parts of this book are missing and this part is misplaced.

> Aristomachos, the son of Kleodaios son of Hyllos, who was the son of Heracles (Hdt. 7.204).

In book 8, Herodotus also gives us the full genealogy of Leotychidas II, Kleomenes' nominee to replace his *bête noir* Demaratos, the dyarch he deposes and exiles in 491.[19]

> Commanding both the army and the navy was Leotychidas son of Menares, the son of Hegisilaos, the son of Leotichydas son of Anaxilaos, the son of Archidamos son of Anaxandridas, the son of Theopompos son of Nikandros, the son of Charilaos son of Eunomos, the son of Polydektes son of Prytanis, the son of Euryphon son of Prokles, the son of Aristodemos son of Aristomachos, the son of Kleodaios son of Hyllas, who was the son of Herakles. Leotychchidas belonged to the second of the two houses of the kings of Sparta (Hdt. 8.131.2).

Although Kleomenes I is twenty-four generations removed from the famed Heracles—four or five centuries or more, depending upon how many generations on average you estimate per century—the point of the genealogical table is to demonstrate the longevity and therefore the legitimacy of his royal house.[20] The Agidae trace their lineage back to Heracles because according to legend, the Heraclidae, regarded as direct descendants of Heracles, invaded the Peloponnese to reclaim their paternal inheritance and establish themselves as rulers.[21]

---

19. Leotychidas, a Spartan dyarch, is in overall command of the Hellenic forces in the eastern Aegean during the spring and summer of 479 and therefore the victor at Mycale (Hdt. 9.106.1).

20. Twenty generations, let alone twenty-four, in an unbroken male line of succession is a fanciful claim, if not downright impossible—but we might note that later Herodotus gives the equivalent sixteen generations for Leotychidas of the Eurypontid line (Hdt. 8.131.2). A king list extending from Heracles to the mid-fifth century is the stuff of mythology, but a partial list from the sixth to the fifth century looks as follows:

AGIADS		EURYPONTIDS	
Leon	590−560	Agasikles	575−550
Anaxabdridas II	560−520	Ariston	550−515
Kleomenes I	520−490	Demaratos	515−491
Leonidas I	490−480	Leotychidas II	491−469
Pleistarchos	480−459	Archidamos II	469−427

21. Herodotus' estimate of three generations of men per century fits poorly with later experience (Hdt. 2.142.2). However, in book 2 of the *Histories* he is focussed on demonstrating that Egyptian history stretched much further back than did that of the Hellenes. Taking three generations per one hundred years rather than the five generations he used in book 1 when commenting on and obscure lineage of Heraclid kings of Lydia (23 years per generation = 505 ÷ 22) is an easy way of achieving this (see Hdt. 1.7.4).

Spartan Statesmanship

One incident early in Kleomenes' reign, perhaps as late as 517, shows the young king in a particularly flattering, albeit isolationist light, and becomes perhaps his *one character-defining moment*.

> Maiandrios, after escaping from Samos, sailed to Lacedaemon [Sparta]. He had taken what he could when he left, and when he got there, he set out his silver and gold cups and had his servants polish them while he went out to engage in conversation with Kleomenes, son of Anaxandridas, who was king of Sparta, and to bring him to his house. When Kleomenes looked at the cups, he was struck with wonder and amazement. Maiandrios would then tell him to take as many as he wanted. [2] After Maiandrios had said this two or three times, Kleomenes proved himself to be the most just of men, in that he refused to take what Maiandrios was trying to give away to him. But he realized that Maiandrios would find a way to take revenge on him by offering the gifts to others in the community; so he went to the ephors and said that it would be better for Sparta if the Samian visitor were made to leave the Peloponnese so that he could not persuade him or any other Spartan to become corrupt (Hdt. 3.148.1–2).
>
> The ephors complied and proclaimed the banishment of Maiandrios (Hdt. 3.149.1).

Not only does this suggest that some Spartans, despite their institutional austerity, are potentially susceptible to bribery—although clearly here Kleomenes is not—we should note that the young king only makes the banishment request; the ephors have the executive power. A subtlety here is that Herodotus has the young king suggesting that one or more of his ephors may be even more susceptible to bribery than he is! This question about bribery and corruption reoccurs throughout the *Histories* particularly in relations between Sparta and Athens and between both cities and the Oracle at Delphi. One interpretation is that Kleomenes is incorruptible by nature and hopes that others will share the same ethical standards—he will not even dream of corrupting the Pythia until presented with irrefutable evidence that others have succeeded in doing so. For Kleomenes this ethical if not religious lack among other rulers must have been a very bitter pill to swallow.

Herodotus will recount a similar incident some sixteen years later, when another Ionian tyrant, perhaps ignorant of how matters are usually conducted in Sparta, makes the same gross miscalculation. Both incidents highlight Sparta's strict isolationism—if the problem lies outside of the Peloponnese they must have good reason to become involved. There is also the pragmatic view that the cost of garrisoning the Greek city states on the western coast of Anatolia is prohibitive. A combined naval force might offer some defence to Greek settlements on islands in the Aegean, but the Spartans are not seafarers.

Sparta and Athenian Politics

Herodotus gives very little background to the Spartan interest in Athenian politics near the end of the sixth century during the Peisistratid tyranny. After his father's death in 527, Hippias son of Peisistratos continues his family's rule in Athens, but is embittered by the murder of his brother Hipparchos in 514.[22] Sometime around the year 511, the Alcmeonids, who have been exiled by the Peisistratids, try to eject the tyrant, but are unsuccessful (Hdt. 5.62.1–2). However, these Athenian aristocrats are exceedingly wealthy and are currently responsible for re-building the temple at Delphi. According to the Athenians, it is at this time that Kleisthenes bribes the Pythia to continually urge all Spartans coming to the oracle for guidance to also help drive the Peisistratids out of Athens (Hdt. 5.62. 1–2).[23] The first Spartan expedition to do this fails miserably, but next year the Spartans, led by Kleomenes, try again with a more powerful invasion force. What Sparta has to gain from this intervention is unclear—altruism is most unlikely—but it is possible that the Spartans are seeking a favourable oracle for some other matter, in which case helping fulfill another prophesy does no harm—this is simply the archaic and classical Greek version of Pascal's Wager.

In 510, a Spartan land army, this time commanded by Kleomenes, invades Attica. They quickly rout the Thessalian cavalry, enter Athens, and besiege the tyrant Hippias and his supporters who have taken refuge on the Acropolis (Hdt. 5.64–5.65). The Spartans cannot conduct a long siege, but by happenstance the Peisistratid children are captured trying to escape from Athens. Consequently, Hippias and his supporters have no alternative but to accept exile and they travel outside of mainland Greece to Persian sponsored sanctuary in Anatolia (Hdt. 5.65).[24] This expulsion leaves two powerful aristocratic families led by Kleisthenes son of Megacles and by Isagoras son of Teisandros competing for power.[25] Facing

---

22. Two of the more powerful aristocratic families in sixth-century Athens are the Peisistratids—Peisistratos and his sons Hippias and Hipparchus—and a rival family the Alcemeonids, led at that time by Kleisthenes son of Megacles and the Sicyon princess Agariste (Hdt. 6.126). Isagoras, who establishes an oligrchy of three-hundred nobles with tacit support from Sparta, comes from another aristocratic family, bitter rivals of the Alcemeonids for power and influence.

23. This may be the first instance during his reign that Kleomenes is made painfully aware that the Delphic oracle is corruptible. And sadly, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

24. This is not the last we hear of Hippias. In the summer of 490 he accompanies the Persian invaders who land at Marathon hoping that he will be reinstated following a Persian military victory or through treachery within Athens.

25. Kleisthenes, an Athenian aristocrat from the Alcmaeonid family, was born in about 565 and dies some time before the battle of Marathon. He is credited with introducing a number of reforms aimed at reducing the power of rival aristocratic families, excluding his own, of course.

political defeat, Isagoras requests Kleomenes' military assistance to expel the Alcemeonids (Hdt. 5.70.1). Herodotus tosses in the scurrilous if not salacious bone that Kleomenes was known to have been close to Isagoras' wife and that this intimacy governed the Spartan king's actions (Hdt. 5.70.1).[26] Isagoras attempts to resurrect an Alcemeonid curse from late in the seventh-century. This attempt in 507 fails and Kleomenes after seizing the Acropolis is obliged to accept a truce and leave (Hdt. 5.72). It is during this invasion that Kleomenes enters the temple to Athena on the Acropolis, to be challenged by the priestess.

> Thus a divine utterance was fulfilled, for when Kleomenes had climbed up to the Acropolis with the intent of taking possession of it, he went to the inner chamber of the goddess to address her. But before he could pass through the doors the priestess stood up from her throne and said, "Foreigner from Lacedaemon: go back, and do not come into the shrine. For it is not lawful for Dorians to enter here." He replied, "But woman, I am not a Dorian; I am an Achaean." And so now he made his attempt, heedless of the words of omen, and again was evicted with the Lacedaemonians (Hdt. 5.72.3–4).

According to Herodotus, in 506 Kleomenes musters a large army and tries again to establish Isagoras as tyrant of Athens (Hdt. 5.74). Herodotus comments that Kleomenes believes that the Athenians have treated him badly, but whether this refers to their bribing of the Pythia or their ingratitude for expelling the Peisistratids, or both, is unclear (Hdt 5.74.1). But this invasion, which gets into Attica, but only as far as Eleusis also collapses when first the Korinthians and then Demaratos, the other Spartan king, decide that they are all becoming embroiled in unjust acts, or, more likely, military acts of no particular direct benefit to their city-states in the Peloponnese (Hdt. 5.75.1–5.76).

This particular incident—the Korinthians' refusal to support a Spartan led regime-change endeavour in Athens—is convincing evidence that the Peloponnesian League is governed by consensus. The city-states making up the League might not accomplish much outside of the Peloponnese without Spartan support, but Sparta cannot act alone either. Herodotus does not tell us when or how the Peloponnesian League is formed, but he does give some hints.

Sometime around 548 or 547, early in the reigns of Anaxandridas II and Ariston, Sparta receives envoys from Croesus of Lydia who declare:

> "Croesus king of the Lydians and other peoples sent us here with this message: 'Lacedaemonians, the god's oracle told me to acquire the Hellene as friend and supporter. You, I have learned, are the leaders of Hellas, and so I invite you to

26. Remember Heracles is Zeus' son by Alcmene. Twenty-four generations later, Kleomenes, a Heraclid, may well have very much enjoyed her proffered favours and she his; but given the complex decision-making process in Sparta Isagoras' pandering will not have been that influential. In Sparta it was not unknown for the husband to invite another whom he greatly admired to sire a child with his wife.

> comply with the oracle; and I am eager to become your friend and military ally without treachery or guile'" (Hdt. 1.69.2).

So clearly Kleomenes inherits a kingdom recognised as powerful by the Barbarians, although the agreement with Croesus quickly becomes moot when he is defeated and captured by Cyrus. And perhaps at this point it is important to differentiate among the very different forms that an alliance at this time can take.

The simplest alliance is one where two independent states agree *here and now* to defend each other when another state threatens to attack, or when they agree *here and now* to attack a third party. In the former case, since it is the third party that has already taken the decision to attack, it becomes a simple matter of invoking the defensive agreement. But when the action is offensive and no longer immediate—*here and now*—who gets to say who should be attacked and when? This leads to the notion of inequality—one member state takes the lead in decision making. As soon as the alliance expands to more than two members we get the potentially complicated situation where membership in the alliance implies that each state has agreed to have the same friends and enemies.[27] And so when Korinth takes the decision not to support the Spartan-led attack on Athens, what are they doing? Are they breaking their alliance with Sparta, or only disagreeing about whether Athens as an enemy of Sparta is also an enemy of Korinth?

Spartan Isolationism

Kleomenes is more interested in matters closer to home and in the Peloponnese in particular. He may or may not have been aware of Persian territorial ambitions in Europe, but he has very little interest in getting Sparta embroiled in the independence and other political ambitions of the Dorian and Ionian city-states on islands in the eastern Aegean and city-states along the western coast of Anatolia. In 499 the Ionians in an attempt to enlist Spartan support for a revolt against their Persian ruler, Darius, send Aristagoras, the tyrant of Miletus, to Sparta.

> To begin the discussion, Aristagoras said, "Kleomenes, do not be surprised at my urgency in coming here, for this is how matters stand: that the sons of the Ionians are slaves instead of free men is a disgrace and the most painful anguish, but also to you especially of all others, inasmuch as you are the leaders of Hellas. [3] So now—by the gods of the Hellenes—come rescue the Ionians from slavery; they are of the same blood as you, after all. This will be easy for you to accomplish, since the

27. See W. G. Forrest 88-89 for an expansion of this argument about the nature of defensive and offensive alliances in the sixth- and fifth-century Greece, and the difference between these and simple non-aggression treaties.

> barbarians are not valiant, while you have attained the highest degree of excellence in war (Hdt 5.49.2–3).

Aristagoras continues his flattery, skipping lightly over the geographical obstacles and the fact that the Spartans are not seafarers, saying:[28]

> [8] Well, then, would it not be advantageous for you to postpone your fight against the Messenians who are your equal in battle and whose land is neither so extensive nor fertile and is limited by confining boundaries, and to cease fighting against the Arcadians and Argives, who have no gold or silver, for which a man eagerly fights to the death? But when it is possible to gain the rule over all of Asia, why would you choose to do anything else? [9] That was what Aristagoras said, and Kleomenes replied, "My guest friend of Miletus, I am going to delay giving you my answer until the day after tomorrow (Hdt 5.49.8–9).

Herodotus continues his account:

> When the day they had appointed for the answer arrived and they met at the place they had agreed upon, Kleomenes asked Aristagoras how many days the journey would take to go from the sea of the Ionians to the King. [2] Aristagoras, though he had cleverly misled Kleomenes in everything else, stumbled at this point. For he ought not to have told him the real distance if he wanted to bring the Spartans into Asia, but instead, he told them it was a journey of three months inland. [3] And at that, Kleomenes cut him short and focussing on the journey said, "My guest-friend of Miletus, you must depart Sparta before sunset. Your request will never be accepted by the Lacedaemonians. If you intend to lead them on a three-month journey away from the sea" (Hdt 5.50.1–3).

According to Herodotus, Aristagoras will not take no for answer and follows Kleomenes back to his residence where he tries to bribe the Spartan king with silver bullion, starting at ten talents and increasing the bribe to fifty talents (Hdt. 5.51.1−2). But Kleomenes is not alone and refuses to send his daughter, Gorgo, into another room as Aristagoras requests. It is at this stage that she interjects, "Father, your guest-friend is going to corrupt you unless you leave and stay away from him" (Hdt. 5.51.2). Apocryphal or not, Gorgo is making the point that bribery can be difficult to resist; and, even worse, quickly becomes endemic as it engenders bribery of others with the proceeds—perhaps even for a good cause.

28. Unless Aristagoras is suggesting that the Spartans take an all-land route to the Hellespont then depending upon the scale of island-hopping across the Aegean the sailing distance from the Peloponnesus to (say) Ephesus on the Anatolian coast is some three hundred nautical miles.

Troubles with Argos

There is always an uneasy rivalry between Argos and Sparta (Hdt. 6.76). And in 494 Kleomenes, taking advantage of guile and a particularly ambiguous Delphic double oracle, decisively defeats the Argives at Sepeia. In an early morning attack many Argive hoplites are slaughtered while the remainder flee for refuge into a sacred precinct within the grove of Argos (Hdt. 6.78). Kleomenes' forces then deceive some fifty Argive fighters into surrendering as prisoners of war by announcing that the appropriate ransom has been paid—those surrendering are immediately butchered (Hdt. 6.79). At that point, Kleomenes orders his helots to pile up wood around the grove, and . . . he [then] set the entire grove on fire (Hdt. 6.80).[29] On his triumphant return to Sparta his political enemies bring him on trial before the ephors for his conduct of the war against Argos—specifically that he had not captured and razed the city when he had the opportunity and had accepted bribes not to do so (Hdt. 6.82.1).[30] Resorting to a plausible interpretation of oracles, Kleomenes is acquitted by his judges (Hdt. 6.82.1–2). Either way, with the massacre of so many Argive men of military age, Argos ceases to pose a major threat to Spartan hegemony for a generation (Hdt. 6.83).[31]

Persian Expansionism in Europe

At the end of the campaign season in 492 Mardonios who has been subduing scattered resistance in Thrace, but who loses much of his supporting navy in violent storms in the northern Aegean Sea, withdraws with his remaining troops and ships back to Asia (Hdt. 6.45). But next year Darius makes it evident that he intends attack mainland Greece.

> Darius tried to test the Hellenes to find out whether they intended to wage war against him or to surrender to him. [2] He sent out heralds in all directions throughout Hellas and ordered them to ask for earth and water for the King [swear fealty to him] (Hdt. 6.48.1–2).

29. We infer that those who did not surrender to be butchered on the spot are burned alive in the sanctuary.

30. In her long article entitled "Herodotus and Spartan Despotism," Ellen Millender tries to make the case against Kleomenes; but close reading shows that at this time, late in the sixth century and early in the fifth, the Spartan kings operate very much under a constitutional monarchy, strictly a dyarchy, and their freedom to act in matters foreign and domestic is very limited and governed by precedent, if not law.

31. A continual irritant, the Spartans cannot venture outside of the Peloponnesus without leaving a hostile Argos behind them with the Argive leadership just itching to cause trouble among Sparta's helots when the Spartan army is preoccupied elsewhere.

> On the mainland, many of the Hellenes visited by the heralds gave what the Persians asked, as did all of the islanders to whom the heralds had come with the request. Included among the islanders who gave earth and water to Darius were the Aeginetans. [2] And as soon as they had done so, the Athenians assailed them thinking that the Aeginetans had granted the King's request out of hostility to themselves, in order to march with the Persians. Happily exploiting this pretext, they went to Sparta, where they accused the Aeginetans of betraying Hellas (Hdt 6.49.1–2).[32]

We know that Demaratos and Kleomenes share the Spartan throne at this time, but it appears that Demaratos has his own agenda and never takes Kleomenes' lead in anything, and generally quite the converse.[33]

Troubles in Aegina

Given the failure of the Persian expedition through Thrace the previous year, and the flurry of ship building in Persian controlled coastal cities, both Athens and Sparta must have been aware that the Persian invasion strategy might now involve island-hopping across the Aegean Sea rather than a naval supported land army crossing the Hellespont and then moving slowly west through Thrace and Macedon, and then south through Thessaly en route to Attica and the Peloponnese. Herodotus credits Kleomenes with recognizing that troubles in Aegina are not just an ongoing petty Athenian-Aeginetan maritime trade squabble, but that a fully medized Aegina in the middle of the Saronic Gulf represents a real and present danger to mainland Greece. He takes immediate, forceful, unilateral action (Hdt. 6.49.1). Aeginetan apologists will argue that Aegina's wealthy thalassocracy collapses without good relations with Persia and her allies, particularly the Phoenicians; Herodotus will suggest that being a slave to Persian silver is neither being free nor Greek. The Aeginetan oligarchy sells out any

32. These heralds were to ask the rulers of these mainland and island, city-states for the traditional gift of "Earth and Water" which symbolized their surrender and submission to Persian rule—at the very least they would become tribute-paying vassal states, likely with a small Persian garrison to keep watch. We learn later that these heralds were not treated very diplomatically at all by either Sparta or Athens—they were murdered and their bodies never seen again (Hdt 7.133.1). This incident has echoes of the young prince Alexander of Macedon's actions several decades earlier with Persian envoys demanding fealty from his father (Hdt. 5.18.2–5.21.1).

33. The dyarchs are all Heraclidae, or Heraclids, hereditary masters of the Peloponnesus. They are descended from Hyllus, the eldest of Heracles' four sons by Deianira—all of whom become Achaean kings (synonymous with Homer's Danaans, Argives, and Hellenes, but specifically not Dorians). Heracles, the only mortal in Greek mythology ever to become a god, is mentioned in eight books of the *Iliad* and three books of the *Odyssey*.

notions of a Pan-Hellenic identity to economic expedience. Pan-Hellenism has many facets including: economic, religious, and cultural in addition to the military and political.

> In response to this accusation against them, the Spartan king Kleomenes son of Anaxandridas crossed over to Aegina intending to arrest the most guilty Aeginetans. [2] But when he tried to arrest them, other Aeginetans showed up to oppose him, foremost among them one Krios son of Polykritos, who said that Kleomenes would not get away with seizing even on Aeginetan for he [Kleomenes] had no authority from the Spartan government for doing this, but had been swayed by Athenian money; otherwise his fellow king of the Spartans would have accompanied him to make the arrests. [3] The source of Krios' accusation was a letter from Demaratos (Hdt. 6.50.1–3).

Like the Athenians, Kleomenes sees immediately what a strategic "plum" the island represents. In his case, Sparta has no navy and must rely on her League allies; but from a secure base on Aegina a Persian invasion force can sail around to the Gulf of Laconia perhaps capturing Kythira en route, disembark, and moving up the Eurotas river valley from the south attack Sparta, a completely unwalled collection of villages rather than a city.[34] In this instance the Aeginetan' accusation of Athenian bribery is ridiculous; but the conclusion that Demaratos' meddling borders on treason is not.[35] Kleomenes' frustration is understandable. This is not the first time that his diplomatic and military missions have been thwarted by Demaratos' backstabbing.

Completely blind to all this, Demaratos son of Ariston, the other dyarch is not present, but remains behind in Sparta where, according to Herodotus, he is actively maligning Kleomenes (Hdt. 6.51). Again, according to Herodotus, Demaratos is motivated by jealousy and malice. And Kleomenes ponders how to legally depose him from the Eurypontid kingship seizing on what may have been an irregular birth (Hdt. 6.61.1).[36] Ariston son of Agasicles was dyarch of Sparta from about 550 to 510, but despite marrying twice he remained childless.

Herodotus comments without elaboration that Ariston knew that he was not "the cause of the problem" (Hdt. 6.61.2). The intrigue of divine descent would

---

34. Kythira, which perhaps fortunately in this instance, has no natural deep-water harbours, is strategically located between Crete and the Peloponnesus.

35. The Aeginetans should have thought along the lines of Isagoras several decades earlier and proposed acceptance of a bribe that is difficult either to confiscate or to be obliged to share (Hdt. 5.70.1). But Kleomenes is now older and among the Athenian dignitaries' wives there may not have been any credible, that is both alluring and wilfully patriotic, candidates.

36. The Persians, notable horsemen, are hardly great seafarers, but their allies the Phoenicians deservedly hold an enviable reputation. One obvious invasion route involves leaving the Anatolian coast and sailing north-west across the Aegean Sea subjugating one-by-one those Cyclades Islands not already controlled by Persia.

only add to the allure, and conceivably for such an important dynastic matter, appropriately youthful Spartan widows with children of their own patriotically agree to sequester themselves for several months while being regularly visited by the teenaged Agiad or Eurypontid heir, providing an enviable opportunity for him to demonstrate his potency and reproductive prowess to the ephors and elders. Ariston divorced his second wife and tricked his good friend Agetus into giving him his wife. She duly bore him a son, Demaratos; but unless he was premature he may not have been Ariston's biological son at all (Hdt. 6.63.1−3). Kleomenes uses this incident from thirty or forty years ago for revenge (Hdt 6.64). He persuades Leotychidas, who is from a cadet branch of the Eurypontid line, to challenge Demaratos' legitimacy in court (Hdt. 6.65.1−4).[37] Remember, an unassailable claim of Heraclid descent is the sole legitimizing criterion in Sparta's unique dual monarchy. In this case the Spartans are forging a link back to the Heroic Age and to a time just before the Trojan War, and so this is serious, near religious, business.

In 491, a year before Marathon, Kleomenes with the new dyarch, Leotychidas, return to Aegina. Herodotus writes:

> [Kleomenes] at once took Leotychidas with him and advanced on the Aeginetans, against whom he bore a bitter grudge for their having treated him so contemptuously before. [2] Now that both kings had come against them the Aeginetans decided not to offer any further resistance, so the Spartan kings selected ten Aeginetans of the highest value in terms of wealth and lineage and took them away. Among them were the most powerful Aeginetans, Krios son of Polykritos and Kasambros son of Aristokrates. The kings brought these men to Attica and deposited them as hostages with the Athenians, who were the most hostile enemies of the Aeginetans (Hdt. 6.73.1–2).

We will never know whether the Persians seriously entertain the notion of using Aegina as a base for their attacks on Eretria and Athens. If they did, their plan on an unopposed landing and occupation during the 490-campaign season. Kleomenes' actions effectively scotch a critical part of the Persian's island-hopping invasion option. Doubtless the Athenians who were trading rivals with Aegina were delighted to take these Aeginian hostages off Kleomenes' hands.

Impiety and Corruption of the Delphic Oracle

Kleomenes' efforts to depose a dyarch lead to one of the more distressing episodes in his reign, all stemming from his seemingly endless disputes with his

37. Demaratos' mother subsequently explains to him that he was either Ariston's son or the son of the Agiad Spartan hero Astrabakos—not really an explanation at all (Hdt. 6.68−6.69).

co-regent from the Eurypontid line, Demaratos, and result in his corruption of the priestess at Delphi. The end rarely justifies the means, particularly when the Delphic Oracle is invoked.

> The controversy continued until finally the Spartans decided to ask the oracle at Delphi whether Demaratos was or was not the son of Ariston. [2] It was Kleomenes who had come up with the idea to refer his question to the Pythia, and he next gained the support of Kobon son of Aristophanes, who wielded the greatest influence at Delphi and who then persuaded Periallos the Pythia to proclaim what Kleomenes wanted her to say. [3] And thus when the sacred delegates presented their question, the Pythia asserted that Demaratos was not the son of Ariston. Later, however, these intrigues became known, and as a result, Kobon was exiled from Delphi, while Periallos the Pythia was ousted from her position of honor (Hdt. 6.66.1–3).

And so that is how Demaratos is deposed in about 491, and why Leotychidas, a close relative in the Eurypontid line of succession, is appointed to his place (Hdt. 6.67.1).[38] With Demaratos out of the way, Kleomenes and the new Eurypontid king Leotychidas finally act against the Aeginetans and take the ten most powerful citizens prisoner and leave them with the Athenians as hostages (Hdt. 6.73). It will be another decade before any Pan-Hellenic unity in this East-West aggression will emerge, and only when the Hellenes all know that Xerxes is assembling his huge invasion force in Sardis. The most serious of these hostilities is that between Athens and Aegina, who mutually agree to temporarily set aside their grievances (Hdt. 7.145.1). Self-interest is a powerful motivator.

Demaratos is exiled and seeking safety ends up as an honoured guest and respected advisor in Darius' court in Susa. Herodotus goes out of his way to imply that Demaratos is not guilty of treason but almost certainly has no expectations that he will ever recover the Spartan throne.

Mysterious Demise

Kleomenes' final days as the Agiad king are no less controversial and cloaked in mystery—does he drift into insanity—is there a medical explanation for what appears to be dementia—or is he now regarded as a loose cannon and quietly assassinated on orders from the Board of Ephors or perhaps a clique

38. In book 1, Herodotus describes the lavish silver and gold *dedications* that Gyges bestows on the Delphic oracle after he and Candaules' widow receive a favourable pronouncement on their violent dynastic change (Hdt. 1.14.1–2). Throughout his *Histories* Herodotus hints that there is often more than a sulphurous whiff of something else emanating from Delphi's depths. Kleomenes is far from the first Greek or non-Greek to dip into their treasury to encourage, assure, or reward, a favourable prophesy—corruption.

within the Council of Elders?[39] Even the date of his demise—before or after Marathon—is clouded in uncertainty. Herodotus offers several seemingly plausible accounts but does not supply a reliable chronology.

> When the Lacedaemonians learned what Kleomenes was up to, they became afraid and brought him back to Sparta, where he resumed ruling on the same terms as he had before. But as soon as he returned, he was stricken by madness (although he had been somewhat deranged even before this). For now, whenever he encountered a Spartan, he would thrust his staff into his face. [2] Because he was doing this and not in his right mind, his relatives confined him to a wooden pillory, and while he was thus confined, he noticed that one of the guards had been left alone with him and he asked the guard to give him a knife. The guard refused at first, but when Kleomenes threatened what he would do to him when he was released, the frightened guard, who was a helot, gave him a knife. [3] Kleomenes then took the weapon and started to mutilate himself beginning from his shins. Cutting his flesh lengthwise, he proceeded to his thighs, and from his thighs, his hips, and then his sides, until he reached his abdomen, which he thoroughly shredded and then died (Hdt. 6.75.1–3).

Herodotus summarizes contemporary thoughts on what may have caused this bizarre behaviour.

> [3] . . . Many of the Hellenes say this happened because he bribed the Pythia to give those responses concerning Demaratos; but according to the Athenians it was because he had invaded Eleusis, he had ravaged the precinct of the goddesses. The Argives, however, say it was because he had brought the fugitives out of the sanctuary of Argos and executed them, and had no regard for the grove itself but burned it down (Hdt. 6.75.3).
>
> The Spartans, however, say that Kleomenes became deranged not because of any divine force, but because he had become, through his association with Scythians, a drinker of undiluted wine. [2] For the Scythian nomads, eager to punish Darius for having invaded their lands had sent an embassy to Sparta to form an alliance and to organize a plan whereby they themselves would attempt to invade Media from the Phasis river, and they wanted to arrange that the Spartans would march inland from Ephesus and meet them at the same place. [3] They say that when the Scythians had come to Sparta for this purpose, Kleomenes spent a great deal of time in their company, and in fact associated with them more than was appropriate; and it was from them that he learned to drink unmixed wine, which the Spartans believe was the cause of his madness (Hdt. 6.84.1–3).

39. See Alan Griffiths' article "Was Kleomenes Mad?" in Anton Powell, ed. *Classical Sparta*. Griffiths admits that he cannot separate fact from folklore (nuggets from *nugae*), but observes a certain literary parallel with Kleomenes' Persian contemporary Cambyses, both of whom—whether nonsense or not— are accused of insanity evidenced by their numerous atrocities exacerbated by acts of impiety.

Herodotus, ever cautious about impiety, which is still a capital offence, also takes the view that one way or another Kleomenes' insanity is divine punishment for his treatment of Demaratos.[40] But the impiety accusation is potentially capricious, if not downright disingenuous. Some five hundred years later Cicero explores the general point about state sponsored religion, writing:[41]

> For the doctrines of all these thinkers abolish not only superstition, which implies a groundless fear of the gods, but also religion, which consists in piously worshipping them. Take again those who have asserted that the entire notion of the immortal gods is a fiction invented by wise men in the interest of the state, to the end that those whom reason was powerless to control might be led in the path of duty by religion; surely this view was absolutely and entirely destructive of religion (Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.117–118).

Herodotus reveals his ambivalence if not mild scepticism in several instances in his *Histories*, and he may harbour the same heretical thoughts as those that Cicero puts down in the first part of his treatise, *The Nature of the Gods*.[42] We will never know, but Kleomenes' largely successful reign over three decades suggests that dementia, if that is what it is, comes very quickly and only at the very end of his reign.[43] He is succeeded to the Agiad throne by his younger half-brother Leonidas who is already married to his niece, Kleomenes' only child, Gorgo, and who has at least one male child, Pleistarcus, by her.[44] The Agiad succession is assured.

Herodotus does not comment on the selection process, but obviously Leonidas' marriage to Gorgo considerably tidies-up any lingering Agiad succession uncertainties created in the middle of the sixth-century when the Spartan ephors and gerontes

---

40. There is always the background thought that like Wenceslaus I, the early tenth-century duke of Bavaria, Kleomenes was stabbed to death by his Spartan nobles because they feared that he was too progressive.

41. Arguably fifth- and fourth-century Greeks, especially the Athenians, are always quick to take down any leader before (in their opinion) he gets far too big for his boots. And this particular accusation— impiety—is often circular and exceedingly difficult to defend, as even (ὕβρις) *hybris*—another charge—is used as evidence.

42. See Cicero, Marcus Tullus. *De natura deorum, Academica (The Nature of the Gods)*.

43. Alas, we do not know when these Scythian envoys were in Sparta and that story may be entirely fanciful. If the Ionians were unable to lure the Spartans into a military adventure in Persia, what is the likelihood that the nomadic Scythians from the Black Sea area (modern Ukraine), even further away, could ever interest them in a punitive raid? Nevertheless, Herodotus' cliff-hanger is maddening—he omits to tell us how or when Kleomenes dies—is it by his own hand or not and is it before or after the battle of Marathon?

44. Pleistarcus was still a minor when his father, Leonidas I, is killed at Thermopylae in 480. His uncle, Kleombrotus, and then Pausanias, Kleombrotus' son and therefore Pleistarcus' cousin, serve as regents.

insist that his father, Anaxandridas II, however unwillingly, enters into a bigamous union with the sole purpose of providing the state with a legitimate Agiad male heir apparent. But with Kleomenes' untimely death comes the death of the architect of the Peloponnesian League. Herodotus continues his *Histories* and we learn that no one, however weakly Pan-Hellenic, is able to take up this particular leadership challenge.

The No-Show at Marathon

In 491 and 490 there is no such entity as a Hellenic Alliance. We know that Athens requests *ad hoc* Spartan assistance during this first Greco-Persian conflict, but this is very much a *here and now* request. We know that Sparta sends assistance, albeit too late to participate in the battle at Marathon; but Herodotus does not suggest that any other members of the Peloponnesian League send troops. Maddeningly, Herodotus does not tell us by whom the Spartan contingent is led—surely if it was not by one of the kings, he would have said so (Hdt. 6.120).[45] Arguably, the Peloponnesian League consider that the Eretrians and Athenians have brought this Persian invasion upon themselves with their earlier raid on Sardis. Provided the Persians have no intention of establishing a permanent garrison and their retaliatory raid is limited to looting, butchering any captured male defenders, selling the women and children into slavery, and burning the two cities to the ground; then Spartan interest in the continued well-being of such a demonstrably ungrateful people is minimal. For a twenty-first-century reader of his *Histories,* it appears that Herodotus is content to leave us knowing that we do not know and may never know—at least from him. But for his fifth-century audiences much of this is within living memory or only a generation removed. Any seeming omissions in the *Histories* are for brevity. Why write down details of what almost every Hellene already knows full well from likely rich but for us no longer extant oral traditions and contemporary anecdotes?

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the patient guidance during preparation of this article of Dr. Dionysia Eirini Kotsovili, Lecturer, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Centre for Hellenic Studies, Department of Global Humanities, Simon Fraser University, Canada.

45. The general rule was that any Spartan forces leaving the Peloponnese were always under the command of one of the dyarchs. The recently appointed Euripontid dyarch Leotechidas II would have been available if the Agiad dyarch was otherwise engaged or whose health was not up to the rigours of a military campaign.

Bibliography

Cartledge, Paul A. *The Spartans: An Epic History.* London, Basingstoke, and Oxford: Channel 4 Books, Pan Macmillan, 2002.

Cicero, Marcus Tullus. *De natura deorum, Academica. (*The Nature of the Gods). Vol. 19. Translated by Harris Rackenham. Loeb Classical Library Series, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1933. 28 vols.

Curd, Patricia, and Daniel W. Graham (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Forrest, W. G. G. (William George Grieve). *A History of Sparta 950–192 B.C.* London: Hutchinson, 1968.

Geddes, Anne. "Ion of Chios and Politics." In *The World of Ion of Chios*, edited by Andrea Katsaros, and Victoria Jennings. Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2007, 110-138.

Griffiths, Alan H. "Was Kleomenes Mad?" In *Classical Sparta: Techniques behind her Success*, edited by Anton Powell. Norman, OK; London: U of Oklahoma P, 1989, 51-78.

Hägg, Tomas. *The Art of Biography in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012.

Homeyer, Helene. "Zu den Anfängen der Griechischen Biographie." (To the beginnings of Greek biography.) *Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption / A Journal for Ancient Literature and its Reception* 106, no. 1 (1962): 75-85.

Isager, Signe. "THE PRIDE OF HALIKARNASSOS: Editio princeps of an inscription from Salmakis." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 123 (1998): 1-23.

Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield (Eds.) *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts.* Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Laks, André, and Glenn W. Most (Eds. and Trans.) *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume 3: Early Ionian Thinkers.* Loeb Classical Library Series No. 526, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2016, 9 vols. (Nos. 524-532).

Marcovich, Miroslav. *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary*. Mérida, Venezuela: Los Andes University Press, 1967.

Millender, Ellen. "Herodotus and Spartan Despotism." In *Sparta: Beyond the Mirage,* edited by Anton Powell, and Stephen Hodkinson. London: The Classical Press of Wales and Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2002, 1-61.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1975.

Priestley, Jessica. *Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture: Literary Studies in the Reception of the* Histories. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.

Strassler, Robert B. (Ed.) *The Landmark Herodotus*: *The Histories*. Translated by Andrea L. Purvis. New York, NY: Random House, 2007.