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Constructing a Pharmacy: Herodotus and the Walls of Ecbatana

*\*Editions of the Greek texts are given in parentheses, all translations are my own unless otherwise noted*

1.) Herodotus, *Histories* I. 98-99 (Sheets 1993)

Ὁ δέ, ὡς ἔσχε τὴν ἀρχήν, τοὺς Μήδους ἠνάγκασε ἓν πόλισμα ποιήσασθαι καὶ τοῦτο περιστέλλοντας τῶν ἄλλων ἧσσον ἐπιμέλεσθαι. Πειθομένων δὲ καὶ ταῦτα τῶν Μήδων οἰκοδομέει τείχεα μεγάλα τε καὶ καρτερά, ταῦτα τὰ νῦν Ἀγβάτανα κέκληται, ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ κύκλῳ ἐνεστεῶτα. Μεμηχάνηται δὲ οὕτω τοῦτο τὸ τεῖχος ὥστε ὁ ἕτερος τοῦ ἑτέρου κύκλος τοῖσι προμαχεῶσι μούνοισί ἐστι ὑψηλότερος. Τὸ μέν κού τι καὶ τὸ χωρίον συμμαχέει κολωνὸς ἐὼν ὥστε τοιοῦτο εἶναι, τὸ δὲ καὶ μᾶλλόν τι ἐπετηδεύθη. Κύκλων <δ’> ἐόντων τῶν συναπάντων ἑπτά, ἐν δὴ τῷ τελευταίῳ τὰ βασιλήια ἔνεστι καὶ οἱ θησαυροί. Τὸ δ’ αὐτῶν μέγιστόν ἐστι τεῖχος κατὰ τὸν Ἀθηνέων κύκλον μάλιστά κῃ τὸ μέγαθος. **Τοῦ μὲν δὴ πρώτου κύκλου οἱ προμαχεῶνές εἰσι λευκοί, τοῦ δὲ δευτέρου μέλανες, τρίτου δὲ κύκλου φοινίκεοι, τετάρτου δὲ κυάνεοι, πέμπτου δὲ σανδαράκινοι**. **Τῶν πέντε ὦν τῶν κύκλων οἱ προμαχεῶνες ἠνθισμένοι εἰσὶ φαρμάκοισι**· **δύο δὲ οἱ τελευταῖοί εἰσι ὁ μὲν καταργυρωμένους, ὁ δὲ κατακεχρυσωμένους ἔχων τοὺς προμαχεῶνας**. Ταῦτα μὲν δὴ ὁ Δηιόκης ἑωυτῷ τε ἐτείχεε καὶ περὶ τὰ ἑωυτοῦ οἰκία, τὸν δὲ ἄλλον δῆμον πέριξ ἐκέλευε τὸ τεῖχος οἰκέειν. Οἰκοδομηθέντων δὲ πάντων κόσμον τόνδε Δηιόκης πρῶτός ἐστι ὁ καταστησάμενος, μήτε ἐσιέναι παρὰ βασιλέα μηδένα, δι’ ἀγγέλων δὲ πάντα χρᾶσθαι, ὁρᾶσθαί τε βασιλέα ὑπὸ μηδενός, πρός τε τούτοισι ἔτι γελᾶν τε καὶ πτύειν καὶ ἅπασι εἶναι ἀντίον τούτου αἰσχρόν.

And he, when he held power, compelled the Medes to build one city and, in defending this city, to care for the others less. And when the Medes obeyed these things, he had great and strong walls built, these which are now called Ecbatana, being erected in concentric circles. And this wall has been so constructed with the result that one wall is taller than the previous by its battlements alone. I suppose in some way the land helped this come about because it was on a hil, but mostly it was built by skill. While there are seven circles altogether, the palace and the treasuries are in the innermost circle. The biggest wall of these is similar to the Athenian wall in size. **The battlements of the first wall are white, those of the second are black, the third, crimson, the fourth, dark blue, and of the fifth, orange** (light red). **Therefore, the battlements of five of the walls have been dyed with paint. And concerning the innermost walls, one has been gilt with silver and the other gilt with gold with respect to its battlements**. Indeed Deioces had these walls built for himself and for his home, but he ordered the rest of the people to live around the wall. When everything was built, Deioces was the first person who established this rule, that no one should come before the king, but everything should be done through messangers, and the king should not be seen by anyone. And still in addition to these things, it was shameful for anyone to laugh or spit in his presence.

2.) The Relationship between the Colors and the Planets

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| White | Jupiter |
| Black | Saturn |
| Crimson (Dark Red) | Mars |
| Blue | Venus |
| Orange (Light Red) | Mercury |
| Silver | Moon |
| Gold | Sun |

3.) Herodotus, *Histories* I.181 (Sheets 1993)

ἐν δὲ φάρσεϊ ἑκατέρῳ τῆς πόλιος ἐτετείχιστο ἐν μέσῳ ἐν τῷ μὲν τὰ βασιλήια περιβόλῳ μεγάλῳ τε καὶ ἰσχυρῷ, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ Διὸς Βήλου ἱρὸν χαλκόπυλον, καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔτι τοῦτο ἐόν, δύο σταδίων πάντῃ, ἐὸν τετράγωνον. ἐν μέσῳ δὲ τοῦ ἱροῦ πύργος στερεὸς οἰκοδόμηται, σταδίου καὶ τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ εὖρος, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ πύργῳ ἄλλος πύργος ἐπιβέβηκε, καὶ ἕτερος μάλα ἐπὶ τούτῳ, μέχρι οὗ ὀκτὼ πύργων. ἀνάβασις δὲ ἐς αὐτοὺς ἔξωθεν κύκλῳ περὶ πάντας τοὺς πύργους ἔχουσα πεποίηται. μεσοῦντι δέ κου τῆς ἀναβάσιος ἐστὶ καταγωγή τε καὶ θῶκοι ἀμπαυστήριοι, ἐν τοῖσι κατίζοντες ἀμπαύονται οἱ ἀναβαίνοντες. ἐν δὲ τῷ τελευταίῳ πύργῳ νηὸς ἔπεστι μέγας: ἐν δὲ τῷ νηῷ κλίνη μεγάλη κέεται εὖ ἐστρωμένη, καὶ οἱ τράπεζα παρακέεται χρυσέη. ἄγαλμα δὲ οὐκ ἔνι οὐδὲν αὐτόθι ἐνιδρυμένον, οὐδὲ νύκτα οὐδεὶς ἐναυλίζεται ἀνθρώπων ὅτι μὴ γυνὴ μούνη τῶν ἐπιχωρίων, τὴν ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἕληται ἐκ πασέων, ὡς λέγουσι οἱ Χαλδαῖοι ἐόντες ἱρέες τούτου τοῦ θεοῦ.

In one portion of the city, the palace had been built in the center inside a great and strong enclosure. But in another portion is the bronze-gated temenos of Zeus Belos, this still remains into my day, two stades in every direction, because it is a square. In the middle of this temenos a solid tower has been built, a stade in height and breadth, and another tower is mounted upon this tower, and another upon this, until there are eight towers. And the way up these has been built outside all the towers in a spiral, and about halfway up there is a landing and seats for resting, and those climbing up sit on these and rest. And there is a great temple on the last tower, and a great, well-strewn couch lies in this temple, and a golden table lies beside it. But no statue has been erected here, nor does any man dwell here at night, except one local woman, whom the god chose from all women, as the Chaldeans, who are the priests of this god, say.

4.) The Cylinder Seal from Borsippa (text and translation, James and Van der Sluijs 2008, 57)

*é.ur4.(me).imin.an.ki:* “the house which gathers the seven (*me’s)* of heaven and underworld.”

5.) Plato, *Statesman,* 277c (Burnet 1903)

λόγος ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ζῷον τὴν ἔξωθεν μὲν περιγραφὴν ἔοικεν ἱκανῶς ἔχειν, τὴν δὲ οἷον τοῖς **φαρμάκοις καὶ τῇ συγκράσει τῶν χρωμάτων** ἐνάργειαν οὐκ ἀπειληφέναι πω. γραφῆς δὲ καὶ συμπάσης χειρουργίας λέξει καὶ λόγῳ δηλοῦν πᾶν ζῷον μᾶλλον πρέπει τοῖς δυναμένοις ἕπεσθαι: τοῖς δ᾽ ἄλλοις διὰ χειρουργιῶν.

Our speech, just as an image, sufficiently seems to have an outline, but it does not yet seem to have received the sort of vividness **from** **paints** **and the mixing of colors**. But it is more fitting to make clear any image by speech and reason to those who are able to follow than by painting and all handicrafts. But it’s more fitting to reveal it to the others through craftsmanship.

6.) Other Uses of Pharmaka in Herodotus *Histories* (Godley 1920)

A.) 1.212: Tomyris warns Cyrus

‘ἄπληστε αἵματος Κῦρε, μηδὲν ἐπαερθῇς τῷ γεγονότι τῷδε πρήγματι, εἰ ἀμπελίνῳ καρπῷ, τῷ περ αὐτοὶ ἐμπιπλάμενοι μαίνεσθε οὕτω ὥστε κατιόντος τοῦ οἴνου ἐς τὸ σῶμα ἐπαναπλέειν ὑμῖν ἔπεα κακά, τοιούτῳ **φαρμάκῳ** δολώσας ἐκράτησας παιδὸς τοῦ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μάχῃ κατὰ τὸ καρτερόν.’  
  
“Cyrus, insatiate of blood. Do not boast for this deed which has taken place. If by the fruit of the vine, with which after filling yourselves you so rage with the result that evil words rise to your tongue when it has entered your body, if tricking my son with this sort of drug you overpowered him, but not by strength in battle.”

B.) 2.86: On Mummification

οἳ μὲν δὴ ἐκποδὼν μισθῷ ὁμολογήσαντες ἀπαλλάσσονται, οἳ δὲ ὑπολειπόμενοι ἐν οἰκήμασι ὧδε τὰ σπουδαιότατα ταριχεύουσι. πρῶτα μὲν σκολιῷ σιδήρῳ διὰ τῶν μυξωτήρων ἐξάγουσι τὸν ἐγκέφαλον, τὰ μὲν αὐτοῦ οὕτω ἐξάγοντες, τὰ δὲ ἐγχέοντες **φάρμακα**.

Those who bring in the body depart after agreeing upon a price, and those who remain in the workshop embalm the body as seriously as possible. First, they lead the brain out through the nostrils with an iron hook, in this way taking out some of it, and injecting drugs into others.

C.) 2.116: On Helen (Quoted from *Odyssey* 4.227-430)

τοῖα Διὸς θυγάτηρ ἔχε **φάρμακα** μητιόεντα,

ἐσθλά, τά οἱ Πολύδαμνα πόρεν Θῶνος παράκοιτις

Αἰγυπτίη, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα

**φάρμακα**, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά.

The daughter of Zeus had such skillful drugs  
Good ones, which Polydamna the wife of Thon gave to her.  
An Egyptian, whose fertile plains furnish the best drugs, many

which have been mixed for good, and many which have been mixed for miseries.

D.) 3.85: Oebares eases Darius’ mind

ἀμείβεται Οἰβάρης τοῖσιδε. ‘εἰ μὲν δὴ ὦ δέσποτα ἐν τούτῳ τοι ἐστὶ ἢ βασιλέα εἶναι ἢ μή, θάρσεε τούτου εἵνεκεν καὶ θυμὸν ἔχε ἀγαθόν, ὡς βασιλεὺς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος πρὸ σεῦ ἔσται: τοιαῦτα ἔχω **φάρμακα**.’ λέγει Δαρεῖος ‘εἰ τοίνυν τι τοιοῦτον ἔχεις σόφισμα, ὥρη μηχανᾶσθαι καὶ μὴ ἀναβάλλεσθαι...’

Oebares replied in this way: “If indeed, master, whether you are to be king or not depends on this, take heart for this reason and have good spirts, because no one else will be king before you. I have these sorts of charms.” Darius replied, “Therefore, if you have this sort of trick, see to it that you do it and do not delay…”

E.) 4.160: Learchus and Archesilaus

ὁ δὲ Ἀρκεσίλεως εἵπετο φεύγουσι, ἐς οὗ ἐν Λεύκωνί τε τῆς Λιβύης ἐγίνετο ἐπιδιώκων καὶ ἔδοξε τοῖσι Λίβυσι ἐπιθέσθαι οἱ. συμβαλόντες δὲ ἐνίκησαν τοὺς Κυρηναίους τοσοῦτο ὥστε ἑπτακισχιλίους ὁπλίτας Κυρηναίων ἐνθαῦτα πεσεῖν. μετὰ δὲ τὸ τρῶμα τοῦτο Ἀρκεσίλεων μὲν κάμνοντά τε καὶ **φάρμακον** πεπωκότα ὁ ἀδελφεὸς Ἁλίαρχος ἀποπνίγει, Ἁλίαρχον δὲ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Ἀρκεσίλεω δόλῳ κτείνει, τῇ οὔνομα ἦν Ἐρυξώ.

Archesilaus followed those who fled, pursuing them until he was in Leucon in Libya and it seemed best to the Libyans to attack him. When they attacked, they defeated so many Cyrenaeans that 7,000 Cyrenaen hoplites fell there. And after the defeat, Learchus, his brother, strangled Archesilaus, who was fatigued and had drank a drug. But Archesilaus’ wife, whose name was Eryxo, killed Learchus by means of a trick.

F.): 7.114: The Magi and the Strymon River

ἐς τὸν οἱ Μάγοι ἐκαλλιερέοντο σφάζοντες ἵππους λευκούς. φαρμακεύσαντες δὲ ταῦτα ἐς τὸν ποταμὸν καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ πρὸς τούτοισι ἐν Ἐννέα ὁδοῖσι τῇσι Ἠδωνῶν ἐπορεύοντο κατὰ τὰς γεφύρας, τὸν Στρυμόνα εὑρόντες ἐζευγμένον.

The Magi, sacrificing white horses at (the Strymon) sought good omens. And after using these enchantments and many other things in addition, they crossed at the Nine Ways of the Edonian territory, using the bridges which they found crossing the Strymon.

7.) Herodotus, *Histories*, III.82.4 (Godley 1920)

δήμου τε αὖ ἄρχοντος ἀδύνατα μὴ οὐ κακότητα ἐγγίνεσθαι: κακότητος τοίνυν ἐγγινομένης ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἔχθεα μὲν οὐκ ἐγγίνεται τοῖσι κακοῖσι, φιλίαι δὲ ἰσχυραί: οἱ γὰρ κακοῦντες τὰ κοινὰ συγκύψαντες ποιεῦσι. τοῦτο δὲ τοιοῦτο γίνεται ἐς ὃ ἂν προστάς τις τοῦ δήμου τοὺς τοιούτους παύσῃ. ἐκ δὲ αὐτῶν θωμάζεται οὗτος δὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου, θωμαζόμενος δὲ ἀν᾽ ὦν ἐφάνη μούναρχος ἐών, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ δηλοῖ καὶ οὗτος ὡς ἡ μουναρχίη κράτιστον.

And when the people rule, it is impossible that there will not be wickedness. Therefore, when there is wickedness toward the state, there is not hatred for those doing wrong, but strong friendships. For the evil-doers conspire and act together. And this matter is this way until someone from the people standing forth stops these sorts of men. And because of these things, this man is indeed admired by the people. And because he is admired, he is therefore manifest as being a monarch, and in this way this man also makes it clear that monarchy is best.

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