

## Fishing for Power: Reading Herodotean Polykrates through Diktyнна

Herodotos' portrait of the Samian tyrant Polykrates exemplifies the ruler ruined by excessive prosperity and ambition. My paper explores Herodotos' use of a myth of erotic pursuit, that of the Cretan nymph Diktyнна, as a commentary on the tyrant's expansionist impulse. The temple of Diktyнна at Kydonia was built by Samian mercenaries who, though sent by Polykrates as reinforcements to Kambyzes in Egypt, settled instead in Crete and prospered for five years, until driven out by the Aiginetans (Hdt. 3.59). While Herodotean scholars have dismissed this mention of Diktyнна as "a mistaken addition" (How and Wells 1912), scholars of Cretan history and religion have acknowledged the importance of Herodotos' testimony for Cretan relations with Aigina (Stefanakis 1999) and for the antiquity of the Diktyннаion, which flourished until the Imperial period (Welter and Jantzen 1924; Guarducci 1935a-b; Sporn 2002; Tzifopoulos 2004). I argue that Herodotos' reference to the Diktyннаion eloquently interweaves the programmatic themes and the historical context of the *Histories*. Diktyнна, who avoided Minos' pursuit by leaping into the sea, and was rescued in fishing nets (Kall. *h. Art.* 189-205), personifies maritime resources, as well as measure and restraint (Harrod 1975). Herodotos seems to employ consciously Diktyнна's associations to forecast Polykrates' end, and to illuminate Samian activity overseas, especially regarding Crete, as a foil to Athenian maritime *arkhe*.

The chapter on the Samian settlement in Kydonia (3.59), which presents Crete as the target of the conflicting interests of Samos, Zakynthos, and Aigina, is embedded in a more extended narrative on Samian interactions with Sparta, Egypt, and Persia (3.39ff), and is emphatically placed before the end of the Samian *logos* (3.60). Herodotos thus illustrates the acme of the 'Samian Empire' (Shipley 1987) by introducing Crete as a liminal zone where internal and external politics intersect. Diktyнна replicates these associations: she transcends geographic boundaries, marks strategic spots along trade routes, and causes king Minos to pursue her to the island's limits. In building the Diktyннаion at the northernmost point of Crete, the Samians embrace the economic and political aspect of the goddess to legitimize their territorial interests. Similarly, when the Aiginetans dedicate the prows of the Samian ships to the temple of Athena (=Aphaia), understood as Diktyнна's analogue on Aigina

(Paus. 2.30.3-4), they not only reinforce bonds of kinship with Crete (Stefanakis), but also offset the Samian claim to a deity that encapsulates Cretan resources.

The fate of Polykrates himself offers a manifestation of Diktyнна's story pattern: while the ring Polykrates throws into the sea and rediscovers in the belly of a fish (3.42) evokes Diktyнна's rescue by fishermen, the tyrant is compared with the thalassocrat Minos (3.122) shortly before he is murdered at Sardis. The symmetry of Diktyнна and Minos defines Polykrates' rise and fall in sexual terms, evoking the rapes of women in the proem of the *Histories* (1.1-5). Echoes of Diktyнна's myth in Crete-related traditions on the foundation of Cyrene (Hdt. 4.151-55) reaffirm that access to Libya necessitates control of the island, and suggest that the Kydonian affair satisfies earlier interests of Samos and Aigina in N. Africa and the West (Hdt. 4.152). Finally, since Samos' naval power and her conflict with Aigina make her an analogue of Athens, Diktyнна's appearance in the Samian *logos* illuminates Athenian attitudes to Crete: as a victim of Minos' lust, Diktyнна promotes his Athenian depiction as a tyrant, yet her link with maritime resources suggests that Crete poses an obstacle to Athenian claims in the Mediterranean, and recommends explaining the island's marginalization in 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. as a result of Athenian propaganda.

## References

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