

Homologiai Are Meant to Be Broken: Trickery and Miltiades' Paros Expedition in Herodotus

This paper will discuss the account of Miltiades' failed campaign against Paros as given by Herodotus (6.132-136); it will analyze the narrative with regard both to other portions of the *Histories*, as well as alternative accounts of the expedition preserved elsewhere. In doing so, it will demonstrate that Herodotus suppresses the standard version of the expedition in favor of one which deemphasizes and exculpates Parian Medism during the Marathon campaign. An exposition of the author's motives will thus determine that we should regard the historicity of his testimony with considerable skepticism.

The primary focus of research into the account has been to determine its accuracy with respect to particular historical details. These include the date of the campaign and the stated motives behind the expedition (Bicknell 1972, Develin 1977). In contrast, the reasons behind Herodotus' preference of this version and its role in his broader narrative have thus far received comparatively little attention.

As Herodotus tells it, Miltiades undertakes an unsuccessful expedition against the island of Paros shortly after his triumph at the battle of Marathon. At the height of his success, the commander petitions and wins the support of the Athenian populace for a fleet to attack the island of Paros, which had Medized during the campaign against Marathon. While the general claims their support of the Persians as a pretext, Herodotus notes that the truest cause for the expedition was that an individual Parian had defamed Miltiades before the Persians (6.133.1). The commander thus begins his campaign by misleading the Athenian citizenry.

It is at this point, Herodotus notes, that his reckoning diverges from the reports common among all other Greeks and instead follows the Parian account (6.134.1). He tells us that acting upon the advice of a Parian priestess, Miltiades impiously enters a precinct Demeter and is

injured. The expedition ends in failure, and Miltiades dies from his wound. Herodotus gravely concludes that Miltiades had been doomed to come to a bad end (6.135.3).

In contrast to other portions of the *Histories*, the author references but fails to provide a contradictory version of his preferred account (Lateiner 1989). We are fortunate, however, to have the dissenting view of Miltiades' downfall preserved elsewhere (Ephorus 70 F 63, Nep. *Milt.* 7-8). Here, as Miltiades prepares to receive the Parians' surrender, a grove of trees on the island of Mykonos is set ablaze. Both the invaders and the islanders assume that this is a signal given to the Persians. The Parians go back on their agreement and refuse to hand over their city. Therefore, it is from this deceptive action that the term *anapariazein*, "to act as a Parian," came to mean "to falsify an agreement (*homologia*)."

There are obvious reasons why Herodotus would favor the Parian account of events. In choosing his preferred version, Herodotus transforms Miltiades into a tragic figure whose hubris leads him to offend the gods and incur divine punishment. Thus, Miltiades' character follows the familiar pattern of numerous other trickster-figures populating the *Histories* and becomes an exemplary victim of supernatural *tisis* (Hollmann, 2005). In the alternative account, it is the implicit power of the Persians, not the gods, that repels the Athenian forces; here it is Miltiades himself who is the victim of dishonesty.

Less simple to explain, however, is the exclusion of the alternative account from Herodotus' text. For this matter we must look to the problematic question of Medism in the *Histories*. Indeed, in one of the places Herodotus employs the term *homologia*, the historian recounts that the Persians similarly employed a deceptive oath to seize the Libyan city of Barca (4.201). Herodotus, therefore, spares the Parians not only a mention of the slanderous neologism, but also conceals an explicit reference to their Medism. These factors explain the

historian's suppression of the more common account and indicate that we should prefer it to the Parian version of events transmitted by Herodotus.

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