

## Miltiades the Elder and the Younger: Two Early Biographies

By Oliver R. Baker\*

[Miltiades son of Kypselos, also known as Miltiades the Elder—Hdt. 6.35.1, 6.35.3, 6.34–36, 6.36.2, 6.37, 6.38–39]

[Miltiades son of Kimon, also known as Miltiades the Younger—Hdt. 4.137.1, 6.39–40, 6.41, 6.103, 6.104, 6.109–110, 6.132–134, 6.136, 6.137–140, 6.134.2, 6.136.2–3]

*Claims that Herodotus reveals himself as a proto-biographer are not yet widely accepted. To advance this claim, I have selected two men, Miltiades the Elder and his nephew, Miltiades the Younger whose activities are recounted in the Histories. It is the latter, one of only a few Athenians with any battle experience, who taking refuge back in Athens, finds himself in a leadership role during the first Persian invasion of Greece. It is to a near contemporary 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 leap frogging through two of the nine books of the Histories, we can assemble a largely continuous narrative for these two remarkable individuals. This narrative permits us to attribute both credit and moral responsibility for their 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.

It is to Herodotus' near-contemporary, Heraclitus, to whom we attribute the maxim (ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων) “*êthos anthropôî daimôn*” translations for which include the commonplace *character is destiny*.<sup>1</sup> Neither *êthos* nor *daimôn* are easily

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1. 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

translated, and *anthropôî* is often ignored. But the maxim is senseless if any part of it depends on powers outside of the individual. 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. 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 greater autonomy, authority, and agency.

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.<sup>2</sup> To advance this claim, I have selected two exceptional individuals, Miltiades the Elder and Miltiades the Younger, the latter the Athenian hero of the battle of Marathon. Surprisingly neither are found among those twenty-four Greek notables recognised by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*. By leap frogging through two 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 both of these individuals, and thus through their exploits, gauge their character against the epic heroines and heroes described by Homer. Emulating Tomas Hägg, I let Herodotus speak for himself through in-text, quotations.<sup>3</sup> For the latter I have used the Andrea L. Purvis translation.<sup>4</sup>

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 in Heraclitus' footsteps with the ability to assign credit and with it, moral responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

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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.

2. See "Zu den Anfängen der griechischen Biographie." Helen Homeyer writes, So ist Herodot nicht nur der Vater der Geschichte, sondern zugleich auch der Schöpfer eines Zweiges der biographischen Darstellungsweise 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" (Homeyer 75, 81).

3. 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" (Hägg ix).

4. See Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Herodotus*.

5. 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 ἰστορίαισιν Ὀμηρον ἤροσεν,) *Hērōdoton*

## Thankless Athenians

Whether fully deserving of such a singular honor or not Miltiades the Younger, or more formally Miltiades son of Kimon, comes down to us as the Athenian general, one of the ten *strategoï*, largely responsible for the successful tactics employed by the Athenians during the battle of Marathon in the late summer of 490. But as the Spartans lamented so bitterly—after being instrumental in driving Hippias, the last of the Peisistratid tyrants, out of Athens and into exile at the close of the sixth century—the Athenians are a thankless people (Hdt. 5.92.2).<sup>6</sup> Within a year of his Marathon triumph Miltiades is disgraced, tried on a capital offence, and unable to immediately pay a colossal fine dies while ignominiously imprisoned for debt. Election to general in early fifth-century Athens, particularly in time of war, does not come about strictly on merit—you need a little help from your friends and along the way a little help from your enemies and rivals, too.<sup>7</sup> However, there is much more to Miltiades' spectacular military and political career than his disgraceful incarceration and ignominious demise in 489. But for this we have to examine the increasing Athenian dependence on trade during the sixth century with the kingdom of Thrace and with numerous other resource-rich kingdoms along the shores of the Black (Euxine) Sea.<sup>8</sup> This examination is exactly what Herodotus does in book 6 of the *Histories*. But to make sense of the opportunities exploited by Miltiades son of Kimon, we must look at his family, the Philaids, as ambitious and wealthy aristocrats and weigh their influence on events in the eastern Mediterranean during the latter half of the sixth century and early fifth century.

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*ton pezon en historiasin Homêron êrosen*, “[Halicarnassus] engendered Herodotus, the prose Homer of history” (Isager 7–8 and, Priestley 187).

6. From other sources we learn that Hippias (a Peisistratid) was elected *eponymous archon* or chief magistrate in Athens for the year 526/525; Kleisthenes (an Alcmeonid) in 525/524; and Miltiades (a Philaid) in 524/523. To be eligible these citizens had to be aged at least thirty, but were limited to one term and could not stand for re-election later.

7. We do not know to whom this comment applies, nor who said it, but it likely applies to the *demos* rather than the Athenian aristocracy.

8. Herodotus describes the ancient kingdom of Thrace as most numerous, second only to India. But extending from the European side of the Aegean in the west to the Danube in the east it was disunited and therefore militarily weak (Hdt. 5.3.1). The Thracian Chersonese—better known now as the Gallipoli Peninsula—lies on the European rather than the Anatolian side of the Dardanelles and is usually considered part of the Thracian kingdom.

## Athenian Tyrants

Political power and influence throughout sixth-century Athens is unequally shared among a handful of prominent aristocratic families. Over time these families amass land, wealth, prestige, and privileges which they pass on to succeeding generations, in turn reinforced by marriage alliances within the community and outside. One notable family, the Peisistratids, claim descent from Neleus, the father of Nestor who fought in the Trojan War. Another, the Philaids, claim descent from Philaios a son of Ajax, another legendary hero of the Trojan War. Other families, the Alkemeonids, for example, who represent an old Attic family, do not pretend to go back that far, but are nevertheless wealthy and influential.

Tyrant and tyranny are terms that are now considered pejorative, but they have a very different connotation in the eastern Mediterranean during the sixth-century.<sup>9</sup> It is important to recognize that tyranny is usually only a transitional form of government. The citizens facing internal chaos or a threat from an external power select or concur with the temporary appointment of a strong ruler. If this non-hereditary ruler is successful, the crisis which led to this appointment fades and with it the justification for this form of authoritarian rule.<sup>10</sup> But, given human nature, power leads to a sense of entitlement and the expectation that their privileged rule should be extended for life if not become hereditary. In the latter half of the sixth century Athens is governed by the Peisistratid tyranny—first the father, Peisistratos, and then his two sons Hippias and Hipparchus, possibly twins.<sup>11</sup> At this time other communities, Greek- and non-Greek-speaking, are also governed by tyrants or some form of hereditary monarchy, so in this respect Athens is not exceptional.

## Miltiades Son of Kypselos

It is into this dynastic struggle among prominent Athenian families—a struggle which will continue long after the reforms instituted in the last decade of the sixth century by Kleisthenes—that Herodotus first mentions that in about the year 555 Miltiades son of Kypselos, the step-uncle of the future Miltiades son of Kimon—the hero of Marathon—who will be born a year or so later. A Philaid, at

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9. Modern readers must accept the anachronism. For Plato the terms king (*basileus*) and tyrant (*tyrannos*) are not equivalent and indeed are at opposite poles—the philosopher-king the best and happiest of all men, the tyrant the worst and most miserable.

10. For further discussions about the rise and fall of sixth- and fifth-century Greek tyrants see Prentice, 84–87.

11. Peisistratids is the common term for the three tyrants who ruled in Athens from 561 to 510, namely Peisistratos who was born in the last decade of the seventh century and his two sons.

a time when the Peisistratids have a tight hold on power, Miltiades son of Kypselos [c. 590–c. 520] is likely to be discontented with his lot seeing absolutely no opportunities for adventure, let alone political advancement in Athens. However, his career prospects change in an entirely unexpected and unsought direction.<sup>12</sup> Herodotus writes:

The Thracian Dolonci were then in possession of the Chersonese, and because the Apsinthians were pressuring them with war, they sent their kings to Delphi to consult the oracle about the war. [2] The Pythia told them that after they left the sanctuary, the first man that they met on their journey home who offered them hospitality should be invited by them to come to their land as leader of their settlement. So the Dolonci left and traveled down the Sacred Way through Phocis and Boeotia, but since they received no invitation from anyone, they turned off the road toward Athens (Hdt. 6.34.1–2).<sup>13</sup>

From Herodotus' account, the Pythia's sole criterion for selecting a leader is surprisingly progressive—someone who will serve as what we might call *the first among equals*: someone who will provide leadership without becoming autocratic. And surprising in what she clearly discounts—wealth, noble birth, or military prowess—in favor of a generous, unpretentious individual whose altruistic nature it is to host weary strangers without thought of reward or reciprocity. Reading between the lines we can surmise that the Dolonci are also seeking an alliance with one of the city-states of mainland Greece as a deterrent to endless depredations by their neighbors. Their quest is suggestive of embryonic Pan-Hellenism and Athenian hegemony. It might also be that the Chersonese nobles cannot unite under the leadership of one of their own, and so inviting an outsider to rule is an effective compromise.<sup>14</sup> Herodotus' account continues:

This occurred during period when Peisistratos had complete political control over Athens. Miltiades son of Kypselos, however, did command a degree of influence and prestige there; his household was wealthy enough to race four-horse chariots, and he was descended from Aiakos and Aegina, but he was Athenian by a more recent ancestor—Philaos son of Ajax—who was the first of this family to become an Athenian. [2] Now this Miltiades was sitting on his front porch when he saw the Dolonci passing by. He noticed that they were wearing clothes that had not been made locally and were carrying spears. He called out to them, and when they drew near offered them lodging and hospitality. They accepted, and after they had been fed and entertained by him, they revealed everything the oracle had said and asked

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12. Kypselos was the first tyrant of Corinth who reigned for thirty years until his death in 627. Through his daughter, who married an Athenian, he is the grandfather of Kypselos son of Agamestor, who was archon in 597/6 and great-grandfather of Miltiades son of Kypselos (Shapiro 306).

13. The walking distance from the temples at Delphi to Athens is over 150 kilometres.

14. Remember Athens is still almost a half-century away from any form of democracy.

him to obey the god. [3] As soon as he heard their story, Miltiades consented to their request, since the rule of Peisistratos irritated him and he wanted to get away from it. So he immediately sent an inquiry to the oracle at Delphi, asking whether he should do what the Dolonci had asked of him (Hdt. 6.35.1–3).

Miltiades is interested, but only consents after he too takes the time to consult the oracle at Delphi. Although the Dolonci are seeking a tyrant, Herodotus is going out-of-his way to legitimize Miltiades' invitation to rule. At no time does he seek this power and the two quite separate consultations at Delphi—theirs and his—do not suggest anything but piety and prudence by both parties.

### **Miltiades in the Chersonese**

Herodotus does not say as much, but Miltiades and his hosts the Dolonci can hardly take this step without the benign acquiescence of Peisistratids. Immediately we see Miltiades demonstrating both *xenia* and piety—two Homeric character traits that the Athenian aristocrats in particular at the time of Herodotus' writing consider important and which makes them different if not superior to other Greeks. Herodotus continues his narrative:

The Pythia ordered him to do so, and thus Miltiades son of Kypselos, who had previously achieved a victory at Olympia in the four-horse chariot race, now took with him every Athenian who wanted to participate in his expedition, sailed with the Dolonci to their land, and took possession of it, whereupon the Dolonci who had brought him there established him as tyrant. [2] The first thing he did was wall off the isthmus of the Chersonese from the city of Kardia to Paktye, so that the Apsinthians would be unable to invade the land and cause damage there.<sup>15</sup> This isthmus measures somewhat less than four miles wide, and extending from it, the Chersonese measures something more than 46 miles (Hdt. 6.36.1–2).

Even in the mid sixth century many city-states in mainland Greece are experiencing severe population pressures, so Miltiades likely has little difficulty recruiting not only a bodyguard, but adventurous Athenian citizens, perhaps from good but less well-to-do families, to join him as colonists in the Chersonese. Equally, Miltiades wants to do more with his life than self-indulgently own winning racehorses. For Athens's current tyrant, Peisistratos, this is all fortuitous—he gets a potential aristocratic rival and any number of under-employed citizens busy rather than idle and out-of-town. And he gets a fledgling Athenian colony to

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15. Now known as the Bulair Isthmus it lies east of Agora running from Cardia on the Gulf of Soros to Paktye on the Sea of Marmara. The Apsinthioi occupied a region of Thrace directly north of the Chersonese across the Gulf of Soros—presumably this wall isolated any beachheads to the east, so whether their enemies raided by land or sea, this sixth-century defensive wall hindered any attack.

help protect the vital waterway between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Having dealt with any threat from across the Gulf of Soros Miltiades goes on the offensive against Lampsacus on the Anatolian side of the Dardanelles where he is promptly, if not ignominiously, captured. Fortunately, he appears to have quickly found friends in high places. From Herodotus' narrative, Miltiades reputation as a thoroughly worthy ruler went ahead of him to the extent that king Croesus soon intervenes on his behalf, and he is released unharmed.<sup>16</sup>

Thus by walling off the isthmus of the Chersonese, Miltiades repelled the Apsinthians.<sup>17</sup> Then among all the peoples in that region, he first began a war against the people of Lampsacus.<sup>18</sup> The Lampsacenes, however, set up an ambush and captured him alive. Now Miltiades was highly respected by Croesus the Lydian, and when Croesus learned what had happened to him, he sent a declaration to the Lampsacenes commanding them to release Miltiades, threatening that if they did not do so, he would wipe them out as if they were a pine tree. [2] The Lampsacenes who tried to interpret this message were at first bewildered as to why Croesus had used the phrase "wipe them out like a pine tree" in his threat, but then, after much hard thinking, one of the elders came to the realization of its true significance: the pine alone of all trees does not produce any new shoot once it has been chopped down, but is utterly destroyed and gone forever. So now in fear of Croesus the Lampsacenes freed Miltiades and let him go (Hdt. 6.37.1-2).

Lacking a convenient synchronicity Herodotus and his sources are unable to date this event. But from book 1 of the *Histories*, we know that Croesus reigned for fourteen years from about 560 until his defeat by Cyrus the Great; so, this incident likely occurred late in Croesus' reign but early in that of Miltiades. Whatever Miltiades' previous military experience this defensive wall is important whether future attacks come from the north or across the Dardanelles.<sup>19</sup>

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16. Croesus may simply be adopting Hogwarts' school motto, "Draco dormiens nunquam titillandus." In this case, imprisonment or execution of an Athenian aristocrat by the Lampsacenes will likely only bring savage retribution from the Greek mainland.

17. Herodotus' readers will discover that in 480 during the second Greco-Persian War the Spartans hastily construct a similar length defensive wall across the isthmus at Corinth to make it more difficult for Xerxes' troops, particularly his cavalry, to invade the Peloponnese.

18. Lampsacus is a city-state on the Asian (Anatolian) side of the Dardanelles Strait.

19. To finally expel the Persians from the mainland after the Greek victories at Plataea and Mycale, Xanthippos is obliged to conduct a long siege of Sestos in 479 (Hdt. 9.114-118).

## Miltiades and Darius

Evidently, he also acts as general of the Chersonese forces and therefore vulnerable to the fortunes of warfare; but Herodotus gives only an outline of how Croesus brought the city-states in Anatolia under his control before his military defeat by Cyrus the Great in 547 and the continuing rule of Persia by the Achaemenid emperors: Cambyses II, briefly followed by his brother Bardiya, and then by Darius I.

Whatever else he accomplishes during a thirty-five-year long incumbency, Miltiades maintains a measure of Chersonese autonomy and keeps the small Thracian kingdom free of any permanent Persian garrison. However, Miltiades is not immune from the machinations of the Peisistratids. Even after the death of Peisistratos, exiled members of his family, the Philaidae, may have stayed with him from time to time. Curiously Herodotus does not record his reaction to news of his younger half-brother's murder. Herodotus' comment about Kimon son of Stesagoras proclaiming his Olympic victory in Peisistratos' name and the thanks he got for it are deliberately derogatory. He is cautioning his readers that tyranny easily becomes despotic and is fraught with uncertainty if not murderous treachery.

Kimon, son of Stesagoras, had been driven into exile from Athens by Peisistratos son of Hippocrates. [2] And during his exile he won a race with his four-horse team at Olympia, achieving the same victory that had been won by Miltiades [son of Kypselos], his half-brother by the same mother. At the next Olympiad, Kimon won again with the same mares, but this time gave up his victory so that it could be proclaimed in the name of Peisistratos. By relinquishing his victory, he was able to return from exile to his own land. [3] But when he had won with the same mares yet again, it was his fate to die at the hands of the sons of Peisistratos after Peisistratos was no longer alive. They killed him by placing men at the Prytaneion at night to ambush him, he now lies buried at the entrance to the city, across the road called "Through the Hollow," and the horses that won his three Olympic victories are buried opposite him. [4] The horses of Euagoras of Laconia accomplished this same feat, but no others have ever done so. Kimon's elder son Stesagoras was at the time being raised in the Chersonese with his [step-] uncle Miltiades, while the younger son was with Kimon himself in Athens.<sup>20</sup> He was named Miltiades after the Miltiades who had settled the Chersonese (Hdt 6.103.1-4).

From Herodotus' account, bar the ongoing conflict with the Lampsacenes, Miltiades' thirty-five-year rule is largely uneventful. If he treated his hosts unfairly there would have been discontent or perhaps revolt which Herodotus would surely record. Tyrannies are rarely hereditary, but in this instance, it

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<sup>20</sup>. Rebuilt and relocated a number of times over the centuries, but usually on the Acropolis, the Prytaneion is the building formally used by the chief magistrate (eponymous archon)—and serves more like court offices than a town hall.



appears that the Dolonci either solicited or acquiesced in the succession by another Philaid aristocrat as their new ruler. Herodotus writes:

So Miltiades escaped this peril through the aid of Croesus, and later, when he [Miltiades] died childless [circa 519], he handed down both his office and his wealth to Stesagoras son of Kimon, who was his maternal half-brother.<sup>21</sup> And after his [Miltiades'] death, the people of the Chersonese sacrificed to him with the same rituals that are traditionally used to honor the leaders and founders of settlements; they instituted equestrian and gymnastics contests in which none of the Lampsacenes were permitted to compete (Hdt 6.38.1).

The Chersonese nobles would hardly have honored Miltiades in this way if dissatisfied with their aristocratic Athenian ruler, nor would they have accepted his half-brother's son, another Philaid, as tyrant. This can only be interpreted as a successful rule by an outsider, and is a vindication of the Pythia's selection criteria given decades earlier—which criteria fit uncannily well with Heraclitus' maxim—character is destiny. From Herodotus' account we infer no end to the strife with the city of Lampsacus and indeed the Lampsacenes waste no time in assassinating Stesagoras son of Kimon—Miltiades' half-brother—the new ruler who on his assassination in 517 also dies childless.

During the war against the Lampsacenes, Stesagoras was overtaken by death [assassinated] and was also childless. He was struck on the head with an axe in the city hall by a man pretending to be a deserter, but who was actually a hot-tempered foe (Hdt. 6.38.2).

### Miltiades Son of Kimon

Herodotus hints that Athens is watching this unrest in the Chersonese with concern. The grain trade with the Scythians in Crimea and a number of settlements around the shores of the Black Sea is a necessity not a luxury. Given this reliance, the strategic nature of Athenian influence in the Chersonese is obvious.<sup>22</sup> Other settlements, particularly those on the Asian side of the Hellespont, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosphorus—notably Lampsacus—usually hostile to Athenian

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21. The genealogy can be confusing, but the patronymics Kypselos and Stesagoras make it clear that their mother, whose name is never given, married twice. Sometimes for additional clarity Miltiades the Younger is listed as Miltiades son of Kimon son of Stesagoras.

22. This waterway—now referred to as the Turkish Straits—separating Asia from Europe is over 200 miles long. The Bosphorus is about 19 miles long, running from the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea; the sea of Marmara, or Propontis, is about 175 miles long; and, the Dardanelles or Hellespont, about 38 miles long, running from the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara.

interests, can guard or obstruct the passage of merchant shipping at will. Hippias, the Athenian tyrant who has followed in his father's footsteps, loses no time in installing another prominent Philaid, Miltiades son of Kimon, who had served as eponymous archon as recently as 524/523, as ruler in the Chersonese. From Herodotus' account it appears that the people of the Chersonese are not exactly coerced into accepting him, although—perhaps for speed alone—he arrives in a warship rather than a regular Black Sea merchant vessel.

After Stesagoras died in this way, the Peisistratids sent his [younger] brother Miltiades son of Kimon in a trireme to take control of affairs in the Chersonese [circa 516]. The Peisistratids had treated Miltiades [son of Kimon] well in Athens, just as if they had not been guilty of his father's death, which I shall describe in another part of my history. [2] After Miltiades arrived in the Chersonese, he stayed indoors, ostensibly to honor his brother by mourning for him. When the people of the Chersonese learned what he was doing, the most powerful men from all the cities around assembled and set out together to join him and share his grief: but when they arrived, Miltiades had them bound and confined. Miltiades now seized control over the Chersonese, took on the support of 500 mercenaries, and married Hegesipyle daughter of Oloros king of the Thracians (Hdt. 6.39.1–2).<sup>23</sup>

That Miltiades son of Kimon does not sense the depth of trust that the Chersonese nobles willingly gave to his uncle, Miltiades son of Kypselos, is obvious. Several factors may be in play. First of all, he was sent there by the Athenian tyrant Hippias—the Chersonese nobles do not choose him and the selection is neither prophesized nor confirmed by the oracle at Delphi. Although his uncle may have died of old age after a long and successful rule, his elder brother is murdered after a very short rule. Was this assassination a conspiracy? Are others planned?<sup>24</sup> To secure a powerful ally in the immediate area, one of Miltiades' first measures is to marry Hegesipyle the daughter of the Thracian king, Oloros.

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23. Herodotus tells us that the tyrant Miltiades son of Kimon son of Stesagoras married a Thracian princess shortly after becoming the ruler in 516 (Hdt. 6.39.2). However, Herodotus also tells us that his eldest son, Metiochos, who was in command of a trireme, was captured by the Phoenicians when Miltiades was escaping the Chersonese en route to Athens in 493 (Hdt. 6.41.1–3). Perhaps Miltiades was a widower, or had divorced his first wife—Herodotus does not say.

24. Although elected archon in 524/3, his father's murder a few years earlier would make Miltiades wary of anything the Peisistratids said or did. His brother was murdered here; was he sent to the Chersonese to be conveniently murdered, too? It would not matter by whom—a disaffected Chersonese noble, another Lampsacene, or a paid Peisistratid thug—he would still be dead.

### Darius' Territorial Ambitions

Evidently there is no prohibition on an Athenian aristocrat taking a Thracian princess—who was certainly not a Hellene, let alone the daughter of a noble Athenian family—as bride, nor vice-versa.<sup>25</sup> Herodotus gives few details, but it appears that Miltiades son of Kimon quickly follows in his uncle's footsteps securing some sort of diplomatic alliance or non-aggression treaty with the Persians across in straits in Anatolia. By surrounding himself with a bodyguard Herodotus suggests that he is an unpopular ruler from the start (Hdt. 6.39). But one can surmise that this bodyguard and his confinement of a number of Chersonese nobles is only an initial reaction to the murder of his predecessor and a suspicion that internal Chersonese factions lie behind his brother's assassination. It is also at about this time that Hippias son of Peisistratos arranges for the marriage of his daughter to the son of the tyrant of Lampsacus.<sup>26</sup> Whether this marriage alliance helps or hinders Miltiades, Herodotus does not say.

### Relationships with Susa and Athens

Athenian audiences, whether reading, being read to, or perhaps listening to a public recitation by Herodotus himself, cannot help but draw their own parallels with the sixth-century political reformer Kleisthenes, who serves as archon during the term immediately preceding that of Miltiades son of Kimon. These men are, of course, from different aristocratic families—Kleisthenes from the Alcmaeonidae and Miltiades from the Philaïdae. Kleisthenes' election to archon in 525/524 suggests that he was born no later than 555/554, but scholars have determined that he was in fact much older and probably born circa 570.<sup>27</sup> Kleisthenes of Athens is named after his maternal grandfather Kleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, a city-state in the northwest Peloponnese near the Gulf of Corinth.

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25. The eldest son of this diplomatic marriage, Kimon, was born circa 510. Whether he participates in the first Greco-Persian War, Herodotus does not say. But during the second Helleno-Persian War he may well have fought at Salamis in 480 and participated in the largely Athenian naval expedition that after the battle at Mycale successfully attacking the Chersonese fortress at Sestos in 479 effectively removing the remainder of Xerxes' invaders from the European side of the Dardanelles (Hdt. 9.117–9.121).

26. Herodotus does not mention this at all, but Thucydides does so in a digression on Athenian history (Thuc. 6.59.3). Doubtless Miltiades son of Kimon is not impressed and may well have suspected that Hippias is preparing a number of safe havens in Persian-controlled Anatolia should he ever be exiled from Athens.

27. Provided that the usual eligibility rules were in effect, if Miltiades is elected *archon* in 524/523 he would have to have been aged at least thirty then and therefore in his mid-sixties, or perhaps older over thirty years later at Marathon.

Just as Miltiades son of Kimon marries the daughter of a Thracian king, Megacles makes a similar dynastic or diplomatic alliance when selecting, or perhaps competing for his bride. In a delightful digression Herodotus tells the story of the year-long betrothal festivities possibly around the year 575 put on by Kleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, for his only daughter Agariste (Hdt. 6.129–6.131). Whether it really happened that way is neither here nor there, but the tale has echoes of the mythical competition held by Tyndareus for Helen's hand.<sup>28</sup> And given that most marriages are arranged it is telling that in this instance the father has no interest in marrying his daughter to a boorish drunk no matter how advantageous the match. What becomes important for Athenian politics in the sixth century is Megacles (ca. 605–526) is the successful suitor and among their offspring are Kleisthenes, Hippocrates, and a daughter, Koesyra. Another parallel that Herodotus' audiences might discern would be to Peisistratos, who widowed, eventually takes Koesyra, Megacles' daughter by Agariste, as bride thus becoming brother-in-law to a much younger Kleisthenes. However, Peisistratos already has two sons Hippias and Hipparchos from an earlier marriage and has no interest in siring further progeny—and a disappointed and morally outraged Alkmeonid family quickly dissolve their most unhappy and assuredly unfruitful union.

Nor does Herodotus comment on any ongoing relationship between Miltiades and Hippias. But the people of the Chersonese are about to be dragged into military adventures further afield. Given that there are several Chersonese cities—including Sestos and Paktye—on the European side of the straits and Lampsacus is a port city on the Anatolian side, rivalry for control of shipping to and from the Black Sea is inevitable. During the sixth century the Scythians, a nomadic people from an area now known as Ukraine and the Crimea, had raided across the Black Sea, and sometime after his putting down of a revolt in Babylon, perhaps in 513 only a few years into Miltiades' rule in the Chersonese, Darius decides it is time to punish them (Hdt. 4.1.1–2). But he does not embark on this venture unaided.<sup>29</sup> Herodotus writes:

In preparation for his campaign against Scythia, Darius sent messengers around his kingdom to order some of his subjects to provide troops for a land army, some to provide ships, and others to build a bridge across the Thracian Bosphorus. Darius'

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28. Here Herodotus relies on his audiences' familiarity with Homeric epic and Greek mythology and the range of stories about the search for the most-worthy suitor for the most beautiful woman in the world—Helen of Sparta. Notably the father gives each of unsuccessful suitors a talent of silver as salve for their disappointment—not quite the Oath of Tyndareus, but gratuity enough for them to save face.

29. Scholars differ about when Darius embarked on this punitive expedition. The consensus is the year 513. The Persian tactic differs little from the medieval *chevauchée* where the objective is to cause as much destruction as possible within the enemy territory especially when the opponent's forces, often guerrillas, cannot be drawn into a decisive set piece battle.

brother Artabanos son of Hystaspes pleaded with Darius not to lead an expedition against the Scythians, describing in detail how impossible it would be to deal with them. [2] Although this was good advice, he could not persuade Darius to follow it, and so ceased his efforts. When Darius had completed his preparations, he led his army out of Susa (Hdt. 4.83.1–2).

### Raiding Scythia

The cost of good relations with the Persian emperor is supplying his generals with military assistance on demand; and so, Miltiades has to join the proposed Black Sea expedition. Herodotus does not say whether the Chersonese and other Thracian cities had previously suffered depredations from Scythian raids. If so, the costs of supporting Darius' revenge are justified; if not then the raid is a pre-emptive deterrent. Herodotus devotes much of book 4 of his *Histories* to the geography and culture of the Scythian peoples, but whether Darius' intent is simply a raid, or whether he intends a permanent occupation is left uncertain. In any event, Miltiades has a difficult balancing act carefully avoiding the ire of the Persian ruler Darius while ensuring some measure of security for the shipping trade between Athens and the Black Sea.<sup>30</sup> Darius marches his army from Susa to Chalcedon where the Bosphorus has been bridged (Hdt. 4.85.1). According to Herodotus, Darius has already sent the Ionians ahead to the mouth of the Danube.

He had earlier sent orders to the Ionians to sail on the Pontus [Black Sea] up to the Ister [Danube] River, and upon their arrival, to build a bridge over the river and wait for him, for the fleet was being led by the Ionians, Aeolians, and the people of the Hellespont [2] So the fleet sailed through the Kyaneai directly to the Ister. After sailing up the river for two days from the sea, they reached the neck, where the Ister's mouths divide and here bridged the river (Hdt. 4.89.1–2).

Herodotus does not say whether the Chersonese forces under Miltiades are part of this advance bridging party. When Darius arrives at the bridge, his first thought is that once his forces have crossed it should be taken down (Hdt. 4.97.1). However, Koes son of Erxandros, a general of the Mytilenians, persuades him to leave the bridge of boats standing and guarded by the men who built it, thus providing a safe return route for Darius's army (Hdt. 4.97.2–6). Darius then directs them to remain on guard for sixty days. Herodotus' narrative continues:

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30. From time-to-time temporary floating bridges using anchored boats strung together with cables have been constructed across this waterway which separates Europe from Asia and links the Aegean Sea with the Black Sea. Darius successfully bridges the Bosphorus near Byzantium for his Scythian expedition in 513 and Xerxes bridges the Dardanelles between Abydos and a headland near Sestos in 480 during the second Greco-Persian War using this same technique.

Darius tied sixty knots in a leather strap, called the Ionian tyrants to a conference, and announced to them: [2] "Ionians, let my initial plan for the bridge be canceled. Instead, take this strap and follow these orders: as soon as you see me on my way against the Scythians, begin untying one knot each day. And if you go through all the knots and the days exceed them before my return, sail home to your own lands. [3] But until then, the new plan is for you to guard the bridge of boats and exert every effort to keep it safe and secure. If you follow these orders you will do me a great favor" (Hdt. 98.1-3).

Sixty days passes and Darius' war against the Scythians does not go as planned; and Darius devises a withdrawal falling back to his floating bridge over the Ister (Hdt. 4.133.3, 4.134.2-4.136.1). Unfortunately, elements of the Scythian cavalry reach the bridge before Darius and address the guards.<sup>31</sup>

"Ionians the appointed number of days has passed, and you do wrong to remain here [4] Before this you lingered on because of your fear, but now you could immediately tear down the bridge and depart with peace of mind: fare well in your freedom, and be grateful to the gods and the Scythians. As for your former master, we shall deal with him in such a way that he will never wage war against anyone again" (Hdt. 4.136.3-4).

Remember Darius has given orders to the effect that they should not stay guarding the Ister crossing beyond the sixty days, so Miltiades is indeed just following orders.

The Ionians then conferred about how they should respond to this advice. Miltiades of Athens, the general and tyrant of the Hellespontine Chersonese, proposed that they obey the Scythians and thereby free Ionia. [2] Histiaios of Miletus was of the opposite opinion. he said that it was because of Darius that each of them now governed his city as tyrant, and if the power of Darius were destroyed, he himself would not be able to keep ruling Miletus, nor would anyone else be able to rule his own city either. For he said, all of their cities would prefer democracy to tyranny (Hdt. 4.137.1-2).

Eventually, the Ionians decide to deceive the Scythians by only dismantling the eastern-most, or Scythian end, of the bridge (Hdt. 4.139). This passage is also Herodotus' first mention of Miltiades son of Kimon and we learn here that Chersonese forces under his command provide mainly logistical support for the invasion.<sup>32</sup> Darius' forces evade the Scythian cavalry, make contact with the

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31. Herodotus names the Ionian tyrants whose forces are left to guard the bridge, a list which includes Hippoklos of Lampsacus (Hdt. 4.138.1). Lampsacus and the Chersonese are Persian allies for this raid, but whether Darius is able to moderate their often-bitter rivalry Herodotus does not say.

32. Scholars dispute this story, principally because Darius would hardly have left Miltiades alive, let alone continuing to rule the Chersonese if he had proposed such a

Ionian rear guard, the dismantled section of the bridge is rebuilt, and the Persians make their way back to Susa. Herodotus writes:

Darius made his way through Thrace to Sestos in the Chersonese; from there he crossed over to Asia by ship, leaving in Europe a Persian named Megabazos as his general (Hdt. 4.143.1).

We learn that Megabazos backed by some eighty-thousand Persian troops has orders to subdue every city throughout Thrace (Hdt. 5.1–5.3), and he is also to capture and uproot the Paionian people (Hdt. 5.12–5.15). After this conquest of Paionia, Megabazos sends emissaries to neighboring Macedon demanding that they swear fealty to Darius (Hdt. 5.17.1).

### **Persians on the European Side of the Waterway**

Doubtless the presence of Persian troops on the European side of the Straits heavily influences King Amyntas' unhappy but unhesitating acquiescence. His sparsely populated kingdom is far too weak to pose a military threat and Amyntas is able to retain a measure of autonomy and avoids his kingdom becoming just part of another Persian satrapy.<sup>33</sup> Megabazos eventually leaves Thrace and returns to Susa. From what happens next, it would appear that the Persians take oaths of fealty from many rulers on the European side of the Straits, but do not leave permanent Persian garrisons. Perhaps a few nobles' children as hostages are deemed sufficient—Herodotus does not say. But in 510 the Scythians, in retribution for Darius' largely unsuccessful punitive expedition against their homelands between the Danube (Ister) and the Don on the north shore of the Black sea, launch a raid on Darius' allies including the Thracian settlements on the European side of the Straits.

Then he had fled to avoid the Scythian nomads, who, after having been provoked by King Darius, united their forces and advanced against the Chersonese. [2] Miltiades had not waited for their attack but had fled the Chersonese and stayed away for

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treacherous revolt against the Persian Emperor. Doubtless, the Ionian leaders were uncertain about disobeying direct orders, but they had likely used many of their ships building the floating bridge across the Ister and cannot sail home without dismantling the bridge. Elementary military tactics dictate that you do not place the bulk of your forces on the wrong side of an unfordable river, nor do you let your enemy occupy your line of retreat in force.

33. It is from Herodotus that we learn that King Amyntas' son and heir, Alexander, is appalled at what he interpreted as his father's fear of the Persians leading to Macedonian medizing (Hdt. 5.19).

three years until the Scythians had departed and the Dolonci had brought him back (Hdt. 6.40.1.2).<sup>34</sup>

Miltiades temporarily flees to Athens, but resumes his rule of the Chersonese when the invading nomads withdraw (Hdt. 6.40). At first sight, from Herodotus' account, this flight looks like cowardice. However, if the Scythians were only interested in getting even with Miltiades, his well-known absence may well have spared his adoptive countrymen the ravages of conflict. Left unexplained is why Darius does not send Persian troops to support his recent allies. Indeed, Herodotus writes very little about Miltiades' rule between his return to the Chersonese in 507 and his final departure some fifteen years later in 493/492. That the peoples in this region bring him back when the Scythian nomads leave suggests that like his uncle, Miltiades son of Kypselos, he is now a popular ruler and a majority support him.

### **The Ionian Revolt**

From Herodotus' account it would appear that Miltiades goes along with, or does not vigorously counsel against, the Ionian revolt, not that his Ionian neighbors would listen. While there is no evidence that Miltiades involves the Chersonese in the ill-advised raid on Sardis which takes place in 498, he takes advantage of the Persian preoccupation with the Ionian revolt to even an old score by raiding Lemnos and Imbros and handing these two northern Aegean islands near the Chersonese over to the Athenians.<sup>35</sup>

Miltiades son of Kimon had taken possession of Lemnos in the following way. The Pelasgians had been expelled from Attica [during the sixth-century] whether just or unjustly I cannot say, I merely recount what others have told me: Hekataios son of Hegesandros said in his works that they did so unjustly. [2] For he claimed that the Athenians had given the land below Mount Hymettos to the Pelasgianns to reside in as their payment for the wall that had once surrounded the Acropolis. But later, when the Athenians saw how well cultivate this land had become after having been infertile and worthless before, they were seized with envy and a desire to have it back for themselves again. [3] According to the Athenians, however, the expulsion was just, for the Pelasgians inhabiting the area under Hymettos used this land as a

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34. The timeline here is not easy to establish. At the end of the Persian's stalemated Scythian expedition of 513 Darius withdrew west along the shores of the Black Sea making his way through Thrace to Sestos on the Chersonese peninsula leaving behind one of his generals, Megabazos, and eighty-thousand troops (Hdt. 4.143).

35. Herodotus' chronology leaves much to be desired here; whereas scholars do not doubt that Miltiades captures Lemnos and Imbros, they debate when, and some even which Miltiades (Evans 168–170). I follow Evans and favour sometime between 498 and 493, but other dates both much earlier and much later are plausible.



base for unjust acts. At that time the daughters and sons of the Athenians used to frequent the Nine Springs to fetch water, since neither they nor any other Hellenes has servants yet. And whenever the daughters would go there the Pelasgians would insult and show their contempt for the Athenians by violating them. And they did not rest with that offense, but were finally caught in the act of plotting to attack Athens. [4] The Athenians say that they proved themselves to be so much better men than the Pelasgians that though they could have killed them when they caught them plotting, they instead simply ordered them to depart from their territory (Hdt. 6.137.1–4).

Expelled from Attica, some Pelasgians settle on Lemnos and from there plot revenge. They raid Brauron during the annual festival to Artemis abducting young unmarried Athenian women to be distributed among themselves as concubines (Hdt. 6.138.1). Later, viewing the culturally Greek offspring as a threat, they decide to butcher all the male children and their mothers. The Pelasgians are cursed for this outrage but ignore the advice of the oracle at Delphi, bragging they will only leave their land when a ship sails with a north wind from Attica to Lemnos in a day—impossible as Lemnos lies far to the north (Hdt. 6.138–139). Many years later, Miltiades sails from the Chersonese to Lemnos claiming that as the Chersonese was synonymous with Attica the oracle is fulfilled. The people of Hephaistia obey but those of Myrina resist until besieged (Hdt. 6.140.1–2). Herodotus shows Odysseus-like guile on Miltiades' part, integrated with equal measures of piety and moral outrage. Miltiades is an Athenian aristocrat, a former archon, but many of these young victims of abduction, rape, and murder are his kinfolk. Miltiades' family, the Philaids, come from the Brauron region of Attica. Accordingly, the Pelasgians' cowardly and sacrilegious behavior in Miltiades' own homeland is an old score far too close to home he will not leave forever unsettled. Herodotus does not record the immediate reactions of either Darius or the Athenians, nor whether the Athenians immediately secure Miltiades' gift by colonizing the islands.

### **Miltiades' Flight to Athens**

Perhaps in light of Athens' strategic territorial expansion in the Aegean, by 493 Miltiades is regarded by Darius as an unreliable ally. Consequently, he is obliged to abdicate his rule of the Chersonese and to seek asylum with his countrymen back in Attica. Nominally allied to Darius he has led Chersonese troops against the Scythians; his dilemma is that he will not lead these same troops against Athens.

Miltiades son of Kimon had only recently come back to the Chersonese, but he was now overtaken by more difficult problems than he had faced two years before this return (Hdt. 6.40.1).

Herodotus' chronology here is a little deceptive; Miltiades may well have been back in the Chersonese for as many as fourteen years.

He then learned, however, that the Phoenician fleet was at Tenedos, so he filled five triremes with all his wealth and sailed away to Athens, setting out from the city of Kardia and going through the Black Gulf [Gulf of Soros]. But as he was passing the Chersonese, he encountered the Phoenician fleet, [2] and although Miltiades himself and four of his ships managed to escape to Imbros, his fifth ship was pursued and taken by the Phoenicians. It happened that the commander of this ship was Miltiades' eldest son, Metiochos, whose mother was not the daughter of Oloros of Thrace, but another woman. [3] The Phoenicians captured him along with his ship, and when they learned that he was the son of Miltiades, they took him inland to the King, thinking that they would thereby gain great favor, since they assumed that this man's father was the Miltiades who had proposed that the Ionians should, in compliance with Scythian advice, tear down the bridge and sail away to their own lands. [4] However, when the Phoenicians brought Metiochos son of Miltiades to the King, Darius not only did him no harm but indeed much good instead. For he gave him a house and possessions as well as a Persian wife, who bore him children who were to be regarded as Persians. Meanwhile, Miltiades left Imbros and sailed to Athens (Hdt. 6.41.1–4).

Whether Metiochos son of Miltiades is a hostage held in luxury is immaterial—dead he is valueless to Darius. Conceivably Darius is thinking ahead and wants both Hippias and Miltiades on his side as potential puppets to leverage opinion and support in Athens.

In preparation for a punitive raid on Eretria and Athens—retribution for their foolhardy participation in sack of Sardis in 498—Mardonios, the Persian general and Xerxes' first cousin, crosses the Hellespont with a large army complete with naval support with orders to subjugate this area of Thrace and Macedon (Hdt. 6.43.3–4). With absolutely no prospect of military support from mainland Greece the inhabitants of the Chersonese medize, as do Alexander I of Macedon and other rulers. Miltiades flees, but Herodotus does not necessarily imply cowardice. If the Persians are after anyone it is Miltiades himself, not annihilation of the Chersonese nobles or the common folk. Choosing abdication over pointless sacrificial resistance by the Chersonese peoples Miltiades sails to Athens and lands right in the hands of his political rivals (Hdt. 6.104.2). Accused of tyranny Miltiades is tried but acquitted and shortly afterward he is elected *strategos* by his tribe. Precisely why these charges are brought against him is uncertain; after all he had been appointed to serve Athenian interests as tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese following the assassination of his brother. Herodotus does not suggest that he sought the position. Alas, the appointment was by Hippias, Athens' last tyrant, and even after twenty years, to many, still tainted. What exactly happens to his remaining four triremes "filled with all his wealth" Herodotus does not say, but given his family's long absences from Attica his estates may well have presented daunting needs.

This was the Miltiades who had escaped death twice and who had left the Chersonese and was now a general of the Athenians. For the Phoenicians, judging his capture and delivery to the King [Darius] to be of great importance had pursued him as far as Imbros. [2] But he escaped them and returned to his own land, thinking that he was now safe. There, however, his [Athenian] enemies caught up with him and prosecuted him in court for having behaved like a tyrant in the Chersonese. But he was acquitted and escaped them, too, and thus came to be a general of the Athenians, elected by the people (Hdt. 6.104.1–2).<sup>36</sup>

### The First Helleno-Persian War

Miltiades does not have to wait long for an opportunity to serve the Athenian people. During the summer of 492 Mardonios with a vast fleet and a huge land army assemble at Cilecia and move northward along the coast to the Hellespont and then having crossed the straits march through Europe toward Eretria and Athens (Hdt. 6.43). They subjugate the island of Thasos and add the Macedonians to their host as well as all the peoples to the east of Macedon. However, near Mount Athos when sailing west from the Strymonic Gulf around the Chaldice Peninsula, Mardonios loses some three hundred ships and twenty thousand soldiers in a storm before reaching western Macedon. With these fleet losses—warships and transports—along with men and animals Mardonios abandons his march on Eretria and Athens and ignominiously withdraws from the European side of the Straits.

From Miltiades' encounters with Darius, particularly on the Scythian expedition, he must know that Darius will not leave the Sardis raid unavenged. Having already dismissed Mardonios either for bad luck, or failure, or both, in the summer of 490 Darius appoints two other generals, "instructing them to enslave Athens and Eretria, and to bring back the captive slaves into his presence" (Hdt. 6.94.2). Herodotus writes:

After their conquest of Eretria, the Persians lingered for a few days and then sailed for Attica thus applying pressure on the Athenians and fully expecting that they would do to the Athenians what they had done to the Eretrians. Since Marathon was the region of Attica most suitable for cavalry as well as the one closest to Eretria, that is where Hippias son of Peisistratos led them (Hdt. 6.102).<sup>37</sup>

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36. One of Kleisthenes' many reforms was the annual election of the *strategoï*—one from each of the ten tribes; so Miltiades was indeed elected an Athenian general, but only by *his* tribe or *phyle*.

37. Hippias, the deposed tyrant of Athens, who has been living in exile in Anatolia, accompanies the two Persian generals hoping to be reinstated either by treachery by his Athenian supporters within the city, or by the victorious Persians if the city does not surrender.

The Athenians are aware of the fall of Eretria and have been able to repatriate the 4,000 tenant farmers they had offered in aide (Hdt. 6.100.1–3). Herodotus tells us nothing about the debates the Athenians must have conducted in the city about resisting the Persian invasion in terms of who said what to whom, but they make two decisions.<sup>38</sup>

The first thing the generals did, while still in the city, was to send a message to Sparta by dispatching a herald named Philippides, who was a long-distance runner and a professional in this work (Hdt. 6.105.1).

Arriving there a day after leaving Athens, the herald appeals to the Spartans, saying:

“Lacedaemonians, the Athenians beg you to rush to their defense and not look on passively as the most ancient city in Hellas falls into slavery imposed by the barbarians. For in fact Eretria has already been enslaved, and thus Hellas has become weaker by one important city” (Hdt. 6.106.2).

We should note that the Athenians’ message is Pan-Hellenic and disingenuous; they imply that all of Hellas is now in danger of Persian conquest—quietly passing over the notion that perhaps only two cities are targets for savage retribution for the Ionian sack of Sardis which included troops from both Eretria and Athens. Whether by Persian design or happenstance, the timing of the Persian landing at Marathon could not be worse for the Athenians. As Herodotus points out, the Spartans are about to begin nine-day celebrations of one of their more important religious festivals—the Karneia, a harvest festival held annually in honor of Apollo—and the Spartan army cannot leave the city until the full moon (Hdt. 6.106.3).<sup>39</sup>

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38. The early fifth-century military context is critical. It is this East-West conflict that provides the opportunity for individuals on both sides to distinguish themselves as great leaders. See authors such as J. F. Lazenby, and Peter Krentz for more detailed discussions.

39. For phases of the moon in antiquity see <<http://www.paulcarlisle.net/mooncalendar/>>. This line from Herodotus has led to much scholarly conjecture about the (Julian) date for the battle. The Karneia was an important nine-day harvest festival in honour of Apollo celebrated near the end of the Spartan year—their New Year commenced with the Autumn Equinox (September 21/22). Scholars differ, but it is critical to use a Spartan rather than an Athenian calendar; accordingly one plausible argument is based on the full moon occurring on 8 September 490. This would have the battle occurring on September 11 and the late-arriving Spartan contingent viewing the battle field on September 12.

## Marathon: The Legend

Athens' status vis-à-vis the Peloponnesian League is never defined by Herodotus, but the Spartans are prepared to help. Perhaps this is in Spartan self-interest. Should the Persians invade the Peloponnese the League will react, but for the moment if the Persian raids are limited to looting and burning Eretria and Athens, taking slaves back to Darius and reinstalling Hippias as tyrant the isolationist view might simply prevail that this is justifiable revenge for burning Sardis in the spring of 498. Independent of whether Sparta will help, the other Athenian decision is to muster their own army.

As soon as they heard about this [Persian landing], the Athenians rushed to Marathon to defend it themselves, led by the ten generals, of whom Miltiades was the tenth (Hdt. 6.103.1).

It is at this stage that the Athenians are joined in the field by the Plataeans (Hdt. 6.108.1). They are the only allies to provide support against the invaders.

The Athenian generals were divided in their opinions: some were against joining battle, thinking their own numbers were too few to engage the forces of the Medes, while others, including Miltiades, urged that they fight. [2] So they disagreed, and the worst of the two proposals seemed to be prevailing when Miltiades went up to the polemarch at that time, one Kallimachos of Aphidna, who had been selected by lot for his office as polemarch of the Athenians. It was he who had the eleventh vote, for in the old days the Athenians used to grant the polemarch an equal vote with their generals (Hdt. 6.109.1–2).

Miltiades must know that a long siege of Athens risks betrayal from within—their hoplite army and auxiliaries will be disarmed and enslaved, or butchered without striking a blow. And although the Spartans have promised to help, it is time to show real leadership and not to wait for others. What if the Spartan army travels no further north than the Isthmus at Corinth? Do any of the city-states in the Peloponnese believe that they are threatened by the Persians? But he is only one of the ten generals. He cannot act alone. He appeals to the polemarch.<sup>40</sup>

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40. At this time, early in the fifth-century, following Kleisthenes' reforms, the polemarch, who was almost certainly a member of the aristocracy, was one of ten archons appointed by the Assembly. Scholars debate whether by 490 the *archon polemarchos* was only the titular commander-in-chief. Like the other archons he would have to be aged at least thirty, would serve for only one term, but unlike the *stratego* is ineligible for re-election. Although Kallimachos has been selected by his tribe, he gets his particular post by lot, so he may be an able individual but totally devoid of any military experience or prowess. Either way, Herodotus believes that the polemarch holds the tie-breaking vote should be *stratego* be deadlocked.

Miltiades said to Kallimachos, “it is now up to you, Kallimachos, whether you will reduce Athens to slavery or ensure its freedom and thus leave to all posterity a memorial for yourself which will exceed even that of Harmodios and Aristogeiton.”<sup>41</sup> For from the time Athenians first came into existence up until the present, this is the greatest danger they have ever confronted. If they bow down before the Medes, it is clear from our past experience what they will suffer when handed over to Hippias; but if this city prevails, it can become the first among all Greek cities. I shall explain to you how matters really stand and how the authority to decide this matter has come to rest with you. We ten generals are evenly divided in our opinions, some urging that we join battle, others that we do not. [5] If we fail to fight now, I expect that intense factional strife will fall upon the Athenians and shake their resolve so violently that they will medize. But if we join battle before any rot can infect some of the Athenians, then, as long as the gods grant both sides equal treatment, we can prevail in this engagement. [6] All this is now in your hands and depends on you. If you add your vote to my proposal, your ancestral land can be free and your city the first of Greek cities. But if you choose the side of those eager to prevent a battle, you will have the opposite of all the good things I have described (Hdt. 6.109.3–6).

Kallimachos’ is unaware that he is being manipulated, but the appeal to *kleos*—“leave to all posterity a memorial for yourself”—is effective.<sup>42</sup> Miltiades is also aware that opinions among Athenians are divided. Whether Hippias’ reinstatement dreams are realistic or not, there are some in Athens who believe that they can negotiate an advantageous and personally beneficial arrangement with the Persians.

Miltiades’ arguments persuaded Kallimachos, and when the Polemarch’s vote was added to the tally, the decision was made to join battle. And afterward, the generals in favor of the battle each in their turn ceded their day of command to Miltiades when the day came around for each to be in charge. But while Miltiades accepted

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41. At that time this comment is mildly flattering as these two men—“legendary tyrant slayers of Athens” *eleutherioi* and *tyrannophonoi*—were responsible for assassinating Hippias’ brother Hipparchos in 514—hardly legendary in 490, but obviously more so fifty years later when Herodotus is writing. But shortly following Peisistratos’ death in 527 his two sons were responsible for the assassination of Miltiades’ father, Kimon, son of Stesagoras.

42. Complete *archon* lists of all ten *archons*—one representing each tribe—for the early fifth-century are no longer extant. By 487/6 each tribe would select ten candidates, then one of these from each tribe would be chosen by lot, and then these candidates would cast lots for the several functions including eponymous archon, polemarch, and so on (Sealey 204). Nor have the names of the other nine generals for the year 490/89 survived. Herodotus writes that the *polemarch* was selected by lot, which suggests that even in 490 the candidates for the board of *archons* did not know which post they would eventually hold.

this, he would not make the attack until it was his day to preside (Hdt. 6.110).<sup>43</sup>

Delaying giving the order to attack until it was his day to preside Herodotus suggests that Miltiades is prepared to accept sole responsibility for the outcome—glory or ignominy. It also suggests prudence—once a battle starts events change demanding that early plans be jettisoned—right or wrong he will need instant obedience not debate. He knows half of his generals are reluctant to engage and these *stratego*i did not cede him their turns to preside. Over the years Miltiades has learned enough not to risk being outgeneralled.

### An Unexpected and Decisive Victory

The course and result of the battle need little retelling. Herodotus' account, which is also the earliest extant, is given in the closing chapters of book six (Hdt. 6.111–6.116). Modern military historians do not depart dramatically from his account which credits Miltiades with implementing the strategy of meeting the Persian invaders at their Marathon beachhead a full day's march north of Athens. Miltiades, who has likely never previously commanded a large hoplite army, is also credited with the tactic of rapidly advancing in close formation across the plain and dashing, shields held high, over the last stadia when the Greek infantry become within lethal range of the Persian archers.<sup>44</sup> Never satisfactorily explained, the much-feared Persian cavalry is never a factor. But Miltiades' Philaid family gained fame in the sixth-century breeding racehorses; perhaps Miltiades, with some equestrian expertise, gambles that the Persian mounts, after transportation by sea across the Aegean might need several weeks to acclimatize to different water and forage? We know little, except that Herodotus does not mention their cavalry at Marathon.

One of the Persian's military strengths is their light cavalry. Although cavalry units are effective against broken infantry in open terrain—the Greek phalanx

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43. According to Herodotus the armies are at a standoff for several days, but the decision to attack the Persians is taken by Miltiades. The tactic of deploying the phalanx with strong wings and a weak centre may simply have been the necessity to match line lengths. No matter whose idea, and remember Miltiades had never commanded a hoplite army of any size, it was adopted and when both Persian flanks retreated under pressure the two Hellenic wings rotated back to support the centre.

44. Since Kallimachus was killed on the battlefield and Miltiades' son, Kimon, subsequently becomes the most influential man in Athens in the 470s and 460s, one suspects that Miltiades' image as the victor of Marathon also owes much to the accretions of family influence and tradition. Nevertheless, although the *stratego*i are elected by their tribe, in times of war, the tribe will likely only consider candidates of some military competence—everyone is further ahead if the social *dilettante* wait for peaceful times before showing their interest.

usually does not break and indeed Greek commanders choose their battle locations with this in mind.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, animals need water and fodder—both in short supply in Attica—indeed alfalfa, now quite ubiquitous was introduced to the Greek mainland inadvertently by the wayside droppings from Xerxes' horses. The Persians' other major weakness is reliance on their allies for naval support. That it is difficult to reconstruct this particular battle from Herodotus' abbreviated account alone should not be surprising—many in his audience were participants or have relatives who were there. And as an infant at the time and living on the Anatolian side of the Aegean, he was not involved. Sources for details of the land battles Herodotus describes in his *Histories* are restricted to surviving participants; there are no privileged non-combatant observers, and Herodotus has to piece together what really happened from many independent sources—ideally from both Greek and from Persian or Persian allies. No matter, after the defeat at Marathon, those who might have betrayed their city reconsider and the Persians withdraw.

### Hubrys and Impiety

As the Spartans observed decades earlier, the Athenians are an ungrateful people (Hdt. 5.92.2).<sup>46</sup> The euphoria over the unexpected and lop-sided victory over the Persian invaders does not last long. Miltiades comes from an influential wealthy aristocratic Athenian family, which means that enmity among other powerful aristocratic families is never far beneath the surface. Herodotus writes:

Though previously Miltiades had been held in high esteem by the Athenians, after the defeat of the Persians at Marathon he gained even more power and influence. Thus the Athenians were thrilled to grant his request when he asked them for seventy ships, an army, and some money, without revealing against what country he would lead these forces; he claimed, however, that he would make them all rich if they followed him, because they were certain to gain much gold from the land to which he would lead them—at least that's the sort of thing he told them as he asked for the ships (Hdt. 6.132).

Herodotus does not tell his audience why Miltiades wants to attack Paros; let alone why he chooses not explain his strategy to the Athenians. Is Miltiades now

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45. Remember Persian cavalry are in fact unarmoured mounted archers, armed with composite bows, arrows, javelins and short swords for defence.

46. Again we must ask—who are the ingrates? The most likely candidates are from that segment of society that a contemporary American political aspirant arrogantly and contemptibly dismissed as *the deplorables*—those members of the demos always cash-strapped and in this case those who signed up to crew the triremes and who were doubtless relying on their pay as oarsmen to get them out of debt.



looking down on those who look up to him?<sup>47</sup> The Paros attack closely follows his victory at Marathon, but everyone is aware and remembers that in 490 the Persian invasion fleet of 600 triremes and horse transports sail unhindered across the Aegean by island hopping. Herodotus writes:

So the newly appointed generals [Datis and Artaphrenes] left the King and set out on their journey. They went first to the plain of Alcion in Cilicia, bringing along a huge and well-equipped land army. As they camped there, all the ships that had been levied from the various districts arrived to join their forces, as well as the horse-transport ships which Darius had ordered his tribute-paying people to prepare the year before. [2] After putting the horses on board these ships, the land army embarked, and the expedition sailed to Ionia with a fleet of 600 triremes. From there, instead of keeping their ships close to the mainland and sailing toward the Hellespont and Thrace they set out from Samos, went past Ikaros, and made their voyage through the islands (Hdt. 6.95.1–2).

Herodotus explains that Naxos had not yet been conquered. The Naxian islanders flee but are caught and enslaved and Herodotus mentions that the Persians set sail for other islands (Hdt. 6.96). The Delians—Delos is adjacent to Paros—flee to Tenos (Hdt. 6.97). But the Persians sail from Delos and put in at other islands—presumably including Paros—where they take hostages and enlist others to join their forces (Hdt.6.99).

One way to ensure that Darius does not repeat this strategy is to deny him military use of the Cyclades and for that Athens must be sure of their continued allegiance. Lacking a navy to challenge the Persians at sea, swift punishment for medizing is a clumsy deterrent of sorts. And so, Pharos, like Aegina, must not so easily fall under Persian control again.

So Miltiades took command of the army and sailed for Paros, on the pretext that the Parians had initiated a conflict by earlier contributing a trireme to the Persian forces at Marathon.<sup>48</sup> That was his excuse, but actually he bore a grudge against the Parians because Lysagoras son of Teisas, a Parian by birth, had maligned him to Hydarnes the Persian. And so Miltiades sailed out, and when he arrived at Paros, he laid siege to the city while the Parians confined themselves within their city walls. Then he sent a herald to demand 100 talents from them, saying that if they did not give him the money, he would not permit his army to withdraw until it had completely destroyed

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47. Herodotus' readers will recall that in 506 the Spartan dyarch, Kleomenes, makes the same secretive miscalculation when he "mustered an army from the entire Peloponnese without stating his purpose"—that they were going to punish the Athenian people (Hdt. 5.74).

48. Paros which lies west of Naxos in the Aegean Sea is one of many islands among the Cyclades group and is some 160 kilometres (as the crow flies) south-east of Athens. The Persian invasion forces reach mainland Greece by island hopping from southern Anatolia subjugating Paros and other islands in turn as their armada of triremes and transport ships progress north-west toward Eretria and Athens.

them. [3] The Parians had no intention of giving any money to Miltiades, and instead began to devise strategies to protect their city; in particular, they set to work at night to double the original height of their wall wherever it had recently proved to be vulnerable (Hdt. 6.133.1–3).

Herodotus' criticism is directed at the Athenians; they accept Miltiades' promise of riches to share among the *demoi*, just as they had been won over by Aristagoras some ten years earlier (Hdt. 5.97). The Athenian motivation is naked greed rather than a noble quest for justice or future security.

That much of the story is related by all the Hellenes, but from here on, the Parians say that what happened is the following. Miltiades was at a loss as to what to do next; but then a captive slave woman named Timo, who was a Parian by birth and a temple servant of the goddesses of the underworld met with him and told him that if the capture of Paros was of great importance, he should follow her advice. [2] After hearing her counsel, Miltiades went to the hill that lies in front of the city and, since he was unable to open the doors, leapt over the wall enclosing the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros. Then once he had jumped to the inside, he went toward the hall of the temple in order to do whatever he intended within, perhaps to remove some object that was not supposed to be moved or maybe to do something else. As he approached the doors [of the temple], however, he was suddenly overcome with trembling and ran back the way he had come, but as he jumped down from the wall, he badly twisted his thigh, though other say he injured his knee (Hdt. 6.134.1–3).

### **Alleged Impiety and Demise**

The conclusion of Herodotus' story about Miltiades has Homeric echoes of the theft of the Palladium from Troy. The Greeks take matters of impiety seriously—it is a capital offense—any skepticism is buried under a fifth-century version of Pascal's Wager: Ignoring a prophecy being as foolhardy as not taking the time to consult one of the oracles for guidance in the first place.

When the Parians found out that a temple servant had provided guidance to Miltiades, they wished to punish her for it, so they sent sacred delegates to Delphi as soon as they had obtained a respite from the siege. The question they sent to Delphi was whether they should put to death the temple servant of the goddesses because she had instructed their enemies on how to capture her native land and had revealed sacred matters to Miltiades that were not to be disclosed to any male. [3] The Pythia would not permit them to do this, saying that it was not Timo who was at fault for what happened; that Miltiades was destined to end his life unhappily and that Timo had appeared in order to start him down the path to its bad ending (Hdt. 6.135.2–3).

Throughout his *Histories*, Herodotus is careful to include reference—doubtless very selective—to those prophecies sought by the protagonists and their adversaries.

So Miltiades sailed home in a sorry state; he was bringing no money for the Athenians, nor had he added Paros to their territory, despite the fact that he had besieged it for twenty-six days and laid waste to the island (Hdt. 6.135.1).

There is another element at work here. Throughout his *Histories* Herodotus is carefully pursuing the Heraclitan notion that individuals are responsible for their own actions—good or ill. But the Greek religion still has a very Homeric element of communal responsibility, in which the impiety of one individual can jeopardize the well-being of a much larger group. But the expiation of the transgressions of this one offending individual can restore the favor of the gods to all.<sup>49</sup>

Herodotus shows Miltiades at a pinnacle of popularity after Marathon, but he also shows his audience that this pinnacle can become either a plateau or a precipice and that any act of impiety can have immediate and disastrous consequences. Within a year of his triumph at Marathon Miltiades is on trial for his life a second time. This time the fault is his recent unsuccessful campaign against the Parians and the deceit he used to gain authorization for the punitive raid. Found guilty, his life is spared, but despite being bedridden with a battle wound turning gangrenous he is fined—and imprisoned until this is paid (Hdt. 6.136.3).<sup>50</sup> Although his young son Kimon, perhaps aged only twenty, eventually clears the debt—he is too late—his father, the hero of the miraculous Athenian victory over the invading Persian armies has already died miserably and utterly disgraced in prison.<sup>51</sup>

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49. The rape of Cassandra, who had taken sanctuary in a temple to Athena, by the Lesser Ajax comes to mind. The Greek leaders do not heed Odysseus' advice that the offender be stoned to death and Athena—although she supported the Greeks against the Trojans—requests the aid of Zeus and Poseidon in search of revenge for this outrage. Roughly translated as impiety (ἄσέβεια) *asabeia*, it is difficult to define in modern terms, but in the fifth and fourth-centuries is a capital offence.

50. The whole affair is clouded in mystery; Miltiades' pretext for attacking the island (Paros) is that the Parians had supported the Persians at Marathon, but Herodotus suggests that there was also a personal grudge Miltiades wished to settle, perhaps a notable example of why not to mix state business with pleasure (Hdt. 6.133.1).

51. Fifty talents of silver is an outrageously large fine; there are 6,000 drachmas to the talent, so the fine is equivalent to 300,000 drachmas at a time when the daily wage for a skilled worker was one drachma at most. But it might also approximate the cost of the venture—70 triremes, each with a crew of 200, for 30 days, paid at a half-drachma a day amounts to some 210,000 drachmas. Since the Attic standard talent is about 25.9 kg the fine imposed is well over a tonne of bullion. The Philaid (sometimes described as the Kimonid) dynasty is continued by Miltiades the Younger's son, Kimon (c. 510–450).

Now when Miltiades returned home from Paros, he was the subject of much discussion among the Athenians. One in particular, Xanthippos son of Aripbron, brought him to court to be tried by the people on the capital charge of having deceived the Athenians. [2] Miltiades, though present, did not speak in his own defence, for he was incapacitated by his thigh, which was now infected. So as he lay there on a couch, his friends and relatives spoke on his behalf, recounting at length the battle of Marathon and how Miltiades had conquered Lemnos and given it over to the Athenians to punish the Pelasgians. [3]<sup>52</sup> The people sided with him to the extent that they released him from the death penalty, but they fined him fifty talents for his offense. After the trial, gangrene developed in Miltiades' already infected thigh, and ended his life. His son Kimon subsequently paid off the fifty talents (Hdt. 6.136.2–3).

### Conclusions

Herodotus has a warning here, the Athenian reaction to their victory at Marathon is naïvely short-sighted. Punishing those city-states who medize with heavy fines in gold and silver bullion, or razing their cities to the ground is only exchanging one promise of oppression for the certainty of another. Pan-Hellenic ambitions are founded on common interests not threats of crippling fines or assured destruction. Herodotus' readers will readily see that Themistocles' scheme of building a powerful Athenian navy which will deny the Persians free use of the Aegean Sea means that Athens can offer meaningful protection rather than threats to her potential allies. Luckily for the Athenians, this time around, Darius' generals make tactical mistakes at Marathon—mistakes the Persians will learn from and not repeat when they come again. Very few Athenians recognize that there will be a next time and that next time things will be very different.

Having failed in court a few years before Marathon, Miltiades' political enemies finally get a capital charge to stick. If he had successfully coerced the Parians into parting with the one hundred talents demanded as reparation for their medizing—two metric tons of silver bullion—no such trial would have been held—greasing greedy Athenian or other palms with silver usually erases all manner of presumed iniquities.<sup>53</sup> But the Paros revenge raid is a fruitless and expensive failure and at times such as this Miltiades needs more than a little help

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52. A date in the mid 490's for this conquest and generous territorial gift of strategic importance—he would not have the resources to garrison the islands—would strengthen the case that Miltiades' friends make at the trial that his governance of the Chersonese was always to Athens' advantage and that he should be treated as an Athenian benefactor.

53. This is just expedience. Herodotus is unable to conceal a measure of religious / judicial scepticism here. Cicero's treatise from the first century *On the Nature of the Gods* comes to mind, where he criticizes state-sponsored religion for substituting religious awe when other pressures fail—a slippery slope to state-sponsored religious corruption (Cic., *Nat D.* 1.117–118).

from his friends.<sup>54</sup> Help comes from his son, but—too late. For any tyranny to be a success there must first be a pressing need for this form of uncompromising leadership, and then an exceptional candidate to fulfil that role. Both conditions are necessary, and we can gauge the success of the short Philaid dynasty in the Chersonese accordingly.

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54. Many have knowingly or unknowingly paraphrased Tacitus from the first century "Inquissima haec bellorum condicio est: prospera omnes sibi indicant, aduersa uni imputantur." John F. Kennedy said as much on April 21, 1961 about the Bay of Pigs fiasco, "Success has a thousand fathers, but failure is always an orphan."

