

Kleomenes I of Sparta: A Proto-Biography

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

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

Proto-Biography

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

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

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1. Re-discovered in 1994 on the harbour wall of Halicarnassus, the modern Aegean resort of Bodrum in Turkey, the *Salmakis Inscription*, possibly early second century, describes Herodotus as (Ἡρόδοτον τὸν πεζὸν ἐν ιστορίαισιν Ὅμηρον ἤροσεν), *Hêrôdoton ton pezon en historiasin Homêron êrosen*, “[Halicarnassus] engendered Herodotus, the prose Homer of

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

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

history” Signe Isager, “The Pride of Halikarnassos,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie*, 123 (January 1998): 7-8; and, Jessica Priestley, *Herodotus and Hellenic Culture*, (Oxford, 2014), 187.

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

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

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

5. Helen Homeyer writes, “So ist Herodot nicht nur der Vater der Geschichte, sondern zugleich auch der Schöpfer eines Zweiges der biographischen 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” Helene Homeyer “Zu den Anfängen der Griechischen Biographie” *Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption* 106 (1962): 81.

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

described by Homer.⁷ Emulating Tomas Hägg, I let Herodotus speak for himself through long in-text quotations from the 2007 Purvis translation.⁸

Late Sixth-Century Sparta

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kleomenes' Early Life

Herodotus' first mention of Kleomenes is dated to about the year 517 where very early in his long reign he is described as "the most just of men" (Hdt. 3.148.2). But beyond sketchy details of his birth-mother, we know nothing about his early childhood, let alone anything about his adolescence, nor how old he was when selected for the Agiad kingship.¹¹ And, as is usual with Herodotus, we also know nothing about his physical appearance; but if it was remarkable he might have mentioned something.¹² Of course, if he is following Heraclitus' maxim his focus will be on character not on stature, posture, or physiognomy. But following

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

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

Hesiod and Homer he will also detail his Agiad genealogy or pedigree. Indeed, Herodotus gives his readers a detailed account of how Anaxandridas II the son of Leon, who ruled Sparta from about 560 to 520, is manoeuvred by the ephors and gerontes into bigamously ensuring the Agiad line of succession.

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

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

This brings up again a somewhat contested aspect of governance in late sixth- and early fifth-century Sparta; neither of the dyarchs is an absolute ruler—far from it, although the details of how this all works out over time are still vigorously disputed by scholars (see Hdt. 6.51–60). Much of what we believe we know about the governance of late sixth- and early fifth-century Sparta comes from *Plutarch’s Lives* (Lycurgus) which was written some six centuries later. There is a five-member Board of Ephors elected annually by the Assembly, and a thirty-member Council of Elders—the *Gerousia*—comprising the two kings plus twenty-eight men aged over sixty, but elected for life, again by the Assembly. The Assembly (*Ekklesia*) consists of all male Spartan citizens who will certainly vote on important matters such as peace or war.¹⁴ A king continually at odds with several of his ephors only has to wait a year for the blockage to clear—but slipping

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

14. See Cartledge 2002, 45–46.

something really important past his co-monarch, the Board, the *Gerousia*, and the Assembly is well nigh impossible—checks and balances indeed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Disputed Succession

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

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

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

Leonidas son of Anaxandridas, the son of Leon son of Eurykratides, the son of Anaxandros son of Eurykrates, the son of Polydoros son of Alkamenes, the son of Teleklos son of Archelaos, the son of Hrgesilaos son of Doryssos, the son of Leobotas son of Echestratos, the son of Agis son of Eurysthenes, the son of Aristodemos son of Aristomachos, the son of Kleodaios son of Hyllos, who was the son of Heracles (Hdt. 7.204).

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

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

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

In book 8, Herodotus also gives us the full genealogy of Leotychidas II, Kleomenes' nominee to replace his *bête noir* Demaratos, the dyarch he deposes and exiles in 491.¹⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spartan Statesmanship

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

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

The ephors complied and proclaimed the banishment of Maiandrios (Hdt. 3.149.1).

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

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

Sparta and Athenian Politics

Herodotus gives very little background to the Spartan interest in Athenian politics near the end of the sixth century during the Peisistratid tyranny. After his father's death in 527, Hippias son of Peisistratos continues his family's rule in Athens, but is embittered by the murder of his brother Hipparchos in 514.²² Sometime around the year 511, the Alcmeonids, who have been exiled by the Peisistratids, try to eject the tyrant, but are unsuccessful (Hdt. 5.62.1–2). However, these Athenian aristocrats are exceedingly wealthy and are currently responsible for re-building the temple at Delphi. According to the Athenians, it is at this time that Kleisthenes bribes the Pythia to continually urge all Spartans coming to the oracle for guidance to also help drive the Peisistratids out of Athens (Hdt. 5.62.1–2).²³ The first Spartan expedition to do this fails miserably, but next year the Spartans, led by Kleomenes, try again with a more powerful invasion force. What Sparta has to gain from this intervention is unclear—altruism is most unlikely—but it is possible that the Spartans are seeking a favourable oracle for some other matter, in which case helping fulfill another prophesy does no harm—this is simply the archaic and classical Greek version of Pascal's Wager.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spartan Isolationism

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

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

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

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

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

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

Herodotus continues his account:

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

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

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

Troubles with Argos

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

Persian Expansionism in Europe

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Troubles in Aegina

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Impiety and Corruption of the Delphic Oracle

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mysterious Demise

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

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

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

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

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

[3] . . . Many of the Hellenes say this happened because he bribed the Pythia to give those responses concerning Demaratos; but according to the Athenians it was because he had invaded Eleusis, he had ravaged the precinct of the goddesses. The Argives, however, say it was because he had brought the fugitives out of the sanctuary of Argos and executed them, and had no regard for the grove itself but burned it down (Hdt. 6.75.3).

The Spartans, however, say that Kleomenes became deranged not because of any divine force, but because he had become, through his association with Scythians, a drinker of undiluted wine. [2] For the Scythian nomads, eager to punish Darius for having invaded their lands had sent an embassy to Sparta to form an alliance and to organize a plan whereby they themselves would attempt to invade Media from the Phasis river, and they wanted to arrange that the Spartans would march inland from Ephesus and meet them at the same place. [3] They say that when the Scythians had come to Sparta for this purpose, Kleomenes spent a great deal of time in their company, and in fact associated with them more than was appropriate; and it was from them that he learned to drink unmixed wine, which the Spartans believe was the cause of his madness (Hdt. 6.84.1–3).

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

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

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

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

Herodotus does not comment on the selection process, but obviously Leonidas' marriage to Gorgo considerably tidies-up any lingering Agiad succession uncertainties created in the middle of the sixth-century when the Spartan ephors and gerontes insist that his father, Anaxandridas II, however unwillingly, enters into a

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

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

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

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

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

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

The No-Show at Marathon

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

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

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