

ORDERING EMPIRE: VISIONS OF IMPERIAL SPACE IN HERODOTUS' *HISTORIES*

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ABSTRACT: In Aeschylus' *Persians*, the Messenger's account of the battle of Salamis presents a chaotic list of the subject peoples of the Persian King: over approximately thirty lines (302-330), the Messenger crisscrosses the expanse of the Persian Empire, doubling back and pivoting, to create the sense of a conglomerate behemoth of an army confronting the small alliance of Greek *poleis*. Not a generation later, Herodotus would take on the same task of detailing the peoples subject to the Great King of Persia, but unlike Aeschylus, the historian proceeds in an orderly fashion, moving from the Persian centre outwards in, sweeping from north to east, south to west, in ever increasing distance from the Persian heartland (Hdt. 7.61-100). This progression through the *ethnē* in Xerxes' army and fleet functions similarly to the description of the map of the *oikoumenē* given in 4.36-45, where Herodotus likewise begins at a Persian centre to move north and east, then south and west, in his description of the continents of Asia and Libya. The map of the *oikoumenē* in book 4 destabilizes a Hellenic-centric geographic consciousness centred on Delphi; the detailing of the *ethnē* serving under Xerxes fills the geographical void that, on earlier Greek maps, hugged the edges of the *oikoumenē*. The result of these geographical exercises is that Herodotus presents his audience with an image of imperial space that is vast and overwhelming, in this case due to the level of detail and the orderly progression from point to point. By combining this effect with the new geographical consciousness that the *Histories* offers, Herodotus turns the idea and space of the Persian Empire into a *thōma*, something wondrous and terrible to behold in its totality.

RESUMO: Em *Persas* de Ésquilo, o relato feito pelo mensageiro da batalha de Salamina apresenta uma lista caótica dos povos sujeitos ao Rei Persa: em cerca de trinta versos (302-330), o Mensageiro passa em revista a expansão do Império Persa, com recuos e reviravoltas, para criar a sensação de que é um exército construído sobre um conglomerado aquele que confronta uma pequena aliança de *poleis* gregas. Nem uma geração mais tarde, Heródoto repetiria a mesma tarefa de pormenorizar os povos sujeitos ao Grande Rei da Pérsia; diferentemente de Ésquilo, porém, o historiador procede de uma forma ordenada, a partir do centro persa, avançando de norte para oriente, de sul para ocidente, numa distância cada vez maior em relação ao coração da Pérsia (Hdt. 7.61-100). Este avanço através dos *ethnē* no exército e na armada de Xerxes tem a mesma função da descrição do mapa de *oikoumenē* proporcionado em 4.36-45, em que também Heródoto começa a partir do centro da Pérsia, avança para norte e oriente, depois para sul e ocidente, na descrição dos continentes da Ásia e da Líbia. O mapa de *oikoumenē* no Livro 4 desestabiliza uma consciência etnográfica heleno-cêntrica, centrada em Delfos; a pormenorização dos *ethnē* ao serviço de Xerxes preenche um vazio geográfico que, nos mapas gregos mais antigos, tocava as margens da *oikoumenē*. O resultado destes exercícios geográficos é que Heródoto fornece ao seu público uma imagem do espaço

imperial vasta e avassaladora, neste caso devido ao pormenor e à ordem progressiva de ponto para ponto. Combinando este efeito com a nova consciência geográfica que as *Histórias* proporcionam, Heródoto converte a ideia e o espaço do Império Persa num *thōma*, algo fantástico e difícil de abarcar na sua totalidade.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the *Histories*¹ Herodotus several times includes a geographical sketch to accompany the review of an *ethnos* and its *nomoi*. These sketches are not deterministic in the way that climate and geographical positioning are for the Hippocratic *Airs*, but Herodotus' geographical descriptions do pronounce a link between the *nomoi* held by an *ethnos* and the peculiarities of the land that *ethnos* occupies. Geographical description is thus part of the ethnographic program² of the *Histories* that underlies the narrative investigation of the causes behind the hostility between the Greeks and Persians. Of particular note, then, is the fact that the Persian Empire receives not one, but three geographical sketches that describe the space of the Persian Empire by listing the *ethnē* within the Empire: Darius' tribute provinces (3.89-98), the paired descriptions of the Royal Road (5.49.5-52.6), and the list of the ethnic contingents in Xerxes' army and fleet (7.61-100).³ Complementing this focus on Persian space is the map of the *oikoumenē* given in 4.36-45, where Herodotus begins his map in 4.36 from Persia, centring it in the conceptual space of the world as he has centred Persian expansion in the narrative of the *Histories* itself. All in all, Herodotus' narrative presents an interest in both the space of the Persian Empire and the ethnic units who fill that space.

This contribution examines Herodotus' mixing of geography and ethnography in his discussions of the space of the Persian Empire.⁴ In all three,

¹ Herodotus text is from Wilson (2015), Aeschylus from Page (1972); citations are to Herodotus unless noted otherwise. Translations of Greek texts are my own; translations of Persian texts from Kuhrt (2010).

² For the proximate relationship of early Greek ethnography and geography, see Kaplan (2014: 301-303) and Guettel Cole (2010).

³ The inspiration and/or source of these descriptions and lists is generally attributed to an original Persian document that was transformed in various ways by the time it reached Herodotus (Laird 1921: 311-312) or documentary model (Murray 2001: 36-38; Blankenship (2022), where the "model" is Achaemenid imperial bureaucratic discourses). Ruffing (2009: 334-335; 2018: 152) argues for a causal relationship between the Athenian Tribute Lists and Herodotus' account of Darius' tribute provinces (*contra* Blankenship 2022: 74).

⁴ I should not that I am not concerned in this contribution with the accuracy of Herodotus' geographical sketches nor that of the components of the Persian Empire and the ethnographic details given (for which, see Armayor 1978); rather I am interested here in the effects of Herodotus' presentation of Persian space and the consequences that presentation has for Herodotus' larger historiographical and ethnographical program. As Armayor (1978: 8) notes, Herodotus' catalogues in books 3 and 7 (the tribute provinces and *ethnē* in Xerxes army, respectively) have more to do with Homeric catalogue traditions than history. On the relationship between Herodotus' lists and the Homeric catalogue tradition, see also Blankenship (2022: 75-76).

geographical space⁵ is identified primarily by ethnic groups, rather than the landmarks and rivers that help the historian to map Egyptian (2.5-34) and Scythian space (4.47-58, 101), though the latter “remaps” the earlier description of Scythian space according to the Scythian tribes (4.17-28).⁶ In each Persian geographical excursus, the immense size of the Persian Empire is stressed through the conglomerate nature of the Empire, an immensity emphasized through the use of lists or catalogues.⁷ In book 3, the list of tribute paying *ethnē* in each province foregrounds the wealth of the Persian Empire as well as its administrative efficiency, while the geographical sweeps in the tribute lists move from one cardinal direction to the next, crisscrossing the Empire in a bewildering fashion and suggesting an immensity of scale. The map of the Royal Road in book 5 given first by Aristagoras and then finessed by Herodotus give great detail on *one quarter* of the Empire, the northwest. Cleomenes’ rejection of the plan (5.50.3) contrasts the edge of the world position the Spartans hold versus that of the Persians at the centre, where three months does not even cover half of the Empire’s expanse. Finally, the accounting of Xerxes’ land and sea forces in book 7 sees Herodotus create groupings of *ethnē* which, in the aggregate, move from the Persian centre to outline and fill in the spaces of the Empire. In contrast to the crossings of space from book 3 which move scattershot, here Herodotus proceeds in a logical, comprehensive, and even ponderous fashion, replicating the movements of an immense army on the march. The descriptions of space as the Persian army marches thus populates the historian’s image of the world alongside the development of his narrative, while the focus on the Persian space as a united whole offers an image of those disparate lands, once separate, as a united whole under the administrative structures of the Persian Empire.

As I will argue, the effect of these ethnographic and geographic discussions is that Herodotus’ lists of *ethnē* turn the Persian Empire into a *thōma*,⁸ a wonder

⁵ On Herodotus’ treatment of geographical space, see: Myres (1896); Lachenaud (1980); Romm (1989, 1998: ch. 6); Purves (2010: 118-158, 196-233); Clarke (2018); Romney (2017); Rood (2012); Carbonell (1985); Harrison (2007); Zimmerman (1997). For Herodotus’ authorial voice and geography, see Friedman (2006). On catalogues or lists and geographical space, see Guettel Cole (2010: 201-203).

⁶ Rood (2006: 291) discusses the overlapping physical and cultural maps that Herodotus’ geographical descriptions create.

⁷ Skinner (2012: 111-112) argues that knowledge of others depends on two basic questions: who/what lies beyond a communities’ boundaries and how can they be classified and ordered? Lists and catalogues are a way of answering both of these questions by identifying the peoples and places of an area and presenting them in an order intelligible to the audience (see pp. 121-128 for Skinner’s discussion of lists in pre-ethnographic discourses).

⁸ On *thōmata* in Herodotus, see Munson (2001) in general; ch. 4 examines the semiotic valence of *thōma* and associated phrases in Herodotus’ narrative. Munson notes that *thōma* regularly refers to “a tangible foreign artifact, a phenomenon of the landscape or a feature of the flora and fauna of distant lands,” while a special type of *thōma* that she calls “metanarrative *thōma*” describes the activities of foreign peoples (seen in the ethnographic digressions) or

terrible and awesome to behold. This is particularly the case for the listing of Xerxes' army and naval divisions in book 7 as the infantry divisions map out the spaces of the Empire before the cavalry then re-establish the central border spaces. The fleet – concentrated in the eastern Mediterranean – looms over the space of mainland Greece, reminding all that while Susa is three months and three days from the sea, the Asiatic Greeks, Phoenicians, Syrians, and Egyptians – the western flank of the Persian Empire – are not. They are close to Athens, Sparta, and the spaces of mainland Greece. In the following pages, then, I will address how Herodotus describes imperial space, focusing on the administrative apparatuses of the Persian Empire: the Royal Road, Darius' tax provinces, and the ethnic contingents called in at the Great King's behest. The focus of this contribution will be the final section on the army and fleet as detailed in book 7 and how Herodotus uses geographical space not just as a tool of ethnography but also to display the Persian Empire as one of the "great deeds" from the opening of the *Histories*.

2. THE SPACE OF EMPIRE

I want to begin our examination of Persian space not with Darius in book 3 but with Aristagoras in book 5. This map is a fairly straightforward presentation of imperial space from a Greek perspective, and it additionally departs from the holistic perspectives of Persian space created by the lists of tribute provinces and army divisions as the account of the Royal Road describes only one part of the whole Persian Empire. Aristagoras' map and Herodotus' corrections to it stand as a good introduction to how Ionian Greeks presented Persian space versus how Herodotus will describe it. Further, by beginning with Aristagoras, we can see how the positioning of the map in book 5 between the lists of *ethnē* in books 3 and 7 encourages Herodotus' audience to "fill in" the missing three quarters of the Persian Empire, casting further doubt on Aristagoras' glib promises that the Spartan will face little resistance in their invasion of the Persian Empire (5.49.3-4).

The context of Aristagoras' map and the purpose for his visit to first Sparta and then Athens have been much commented on;⁹ I will restrict myself to a few points before turning to the presentation of geographical space in the episode. First, while Aristagoras presents the Persian Empire from a Greek perspective

foreigners (in the history; Munson 2001: 233). As a product of human activity demonstrated both in the various ethnographic sections dedicated to the Persian Empire and in the activities of individuals detailed in the historical portion of the *Histories*, the administration and space of the Persian Empire would fit Munson's category of "metanarrative *thōma*."

⁹ See, among others, Rood (2006: 294-296) and (2012: 122-123, 127-129, 130-133); Branscome (2010); Purves (2010: 144-149); Harrison (2007: 44-45); Clarke (2018: 47-49); Guettel Cole (2010: 205-206); and Blankenship (2022: 89-93). For general commentary on the Royal Road in Herodotus, see How and Wells (1912a: 19-24).

– that is, from Ionia to Susa¹⁰ – he does so in Persian terms, according to the spatial logic of Herodotus’ narrative, for space as Aristagoras and the Persians understand it is to be understood in so far as it further conquest.¹¹ This is the implication of Scylax’s travels around Asia (4.44) and it also underlies Aristagoras’ presentation of space: the Persians, whose space the Spartans will hypothetically cross, will be easy to defeat because of their armour (5.49.3-4) (an ethnographic point) and the lands of the Empire are presented in an easy-to-cross fashion, facilitating the movement of armies.¹²

Aristagoras’ and Herodotus’ presentation of the space of the Royal Road differ in that Aristagoras presents space through ethnic groups and Herodotus via territory. The result is that the former focuses on people and their wealth (reasons for conquest), while the latter describes landmarks, natural features and boundaries, and the distance each territory covers, including the number of staging posts along that stretch of the road, giving geographical and administrative features to fill the landscape (see table 1). Herodotus names the six rivers that must be crossed enroute, four of which must be crossing via ferry, as well as the four fortresses that must be passed, while Aristagoras omits the fortresses and only includes the final river, the Choaspes, whose crossing marks the lands outside Susa and the end of the journey. The additional three days that the starting point of Ephesus adds gives Herodotus’ account greater precision than Aristagoras’, with an overall result that while the presentations detail the same space, Herodotus’ account appears more trustworthy and reliable than Aristagoras’.¹³ The latter’s map is not faulty, just incomplete; Herodotus’ precision then highlights the dangers of his rival’s map being incomplete.

TABLE 1: THE ROYAL ROAD ACCORDING TO ARISTAGORAS AND HERODOTUS (5.49.5-7, 5.52.1-6)

The direction of travel in both accounts is straightforward: the traveller moves from Lydia in the northwestern quadrant of the Persian Empire to Susa just north of centre. The total distance of 14,040 stades (or 450 parasangs and 540 furlongs) as calculated by Herodotus does not even make it to the Persian heartland: the old Elamite capital of Susa was an important administrative hub for the Persian Empire, but it remained outside of Persian territory centred around the cities of Pasargadae and Persepolis. Aristagoras’ “easy” journey into the Persian Empire, then, falls short of the goal of reaching the Persian heartland

¹⁰ Rainey (2001: 57) and Rood (2012: 129); cf. Briant (2002: 391).

¹¹ Dilke (1985: 23); Munn (2006: 188-193, 217-219); Clarke (2018: 279, 306-317); Payen (1995); Rood (2006: 295-96 and (2012: 133-134); Clayton (2007); Harrison (2007: 55-59); cf. Black (1997: 19-21).

¹² Clarke (2018: 76-80) discusses Herodotus’ treatment of geographical space in light of the movement of armies; cf. Rood (2012: 126).

¹³ Branscome (2010: 31).

despite the length of travel and, when compared to the tribute lists and Xerxes' army, does not even cover the full Empire. Cleomenes' dismissal of Aristagoras and his plans (5.50.3) in this light seems sensible. Yet aside from the distance involved, Herodotus' review of Aristagoras' map also presents administrative details: riders change horses at the staging posts/ stations, and fortresses mark the boundaries along with Persian military power and political control. The stations and fortresses mark region after region, dividing the route into a series of "separate units that are themselves part of a larger whole."¹⁴ For Aristagoras, the Royal Road is a way to enter the Empire and, perhaps, a facilitation of conquest.¹⁵ In Herodotus' hands, the Royal Road remains a road and entrance to the Empire, but it also becomes a showcase of Persian administration and the speed by which that administration works as it links the disparate parts of the Empire together.

The list of Darius' tribute provinces in book 3 maintains Herodotus' interest in Achaemenid administration¹⁶ and imperial space. Darius reorganized Cyrus' empire into twenty tax provinces or *nomoi* (table 2). Herodotus, as Aristagoras did with the Royal Road, offers a Hellenized version of Persian space, beginning with Ionia rather than Persia as Achaemenid documents do.¹⁷ For the most part, Herodotus describes each province through the peoples who inhabit the territory associated with the province so that Darius' administrative exercise of breaking space into identifiable units becomes, for Herodotus, an ethnographic exercise. Unlike his movements along the Royal Road, however, Herodotus' presentation of geographical space here is not orderly. Instead, while the grouping of *ethnē* within a tax province is generally logical from a spatial perspective,¹⁸ the historian's movement around the Empire is not. There is general north-south or east-west movement, but otherwise, the historian moves from corner to corner as he lists the peoples that bear tribute to the Persian king. The jump from the northwestern corner with the Mares to the Indians in the (south)east is particularly noticeable and due, Laird suggests, to the exceptional tribute of 360 talents in gold that India pays; the final position India holds, in other words, is emphatic.¹⁹ In addition to the general unordered progression, the Caspians appear twice (provinces 11 and 15) with no modifier to suggest the two provinces

¹⁴ Rood (2012: 128).

¹⁵ Cf. Harrison (2007: 45).

¹⁶ For Herodotus' tribute province list as engaging with Persian bureaucratic administrative practices, see Blankenship (2022: 87-89).

¹⁷ Briant (2002: 391); for a full discussion of Herodotus' take on Darius' tribute provinces, see Briant (2002: 390-393) and Laird (1921: 305). For general commentary on the tax provinces, see How and Wells (1912a: 280-287) and Asheri et al. (2011: 479-493).

¹⁸ There are some exceptions to the generally logical geographical grouping of the individual provinces; Armenia in the 13th province is the most notable (see Laird 1921: 306-308 on).

¹⁹ Laird (1921: 306).

have two different groups of Caspians,²⁰ and there are peoples listed in the provinces that do not appear in the list of army *ethnē* in 7.62-95 and vice versa.²¹

TABLE 2: DARIUS' TAX PROVINCES (3.90-94)

The resulting conceptual map of Persian space is very similar to that achieved by one of Xerxes' inscriptions where, after he claims to be "the great king, king of kings, king of countries containing all kinds of men, king on this great earth far and wide," proclaims:

By the favour of Aura Mazda, these are the countries of which I was king outside of Persia; I ruled them; they bore me tribute ... Media, Elam, Arachosia, Armenia, Dragiana, Parthia, Areia, Bactria, Sigidana, Chorasmia, Babylonia, Assyria, Sattagydia, Lydia, Egypt, Ionians who dwell by the Sea and (those who) dwell beyond the Sea, the Maka people, Arabia, Gandara, Indus, Cappadochia, Dahaw (?), Scythians (Saca) who wear pointed hats, Thrace, the Akaufaka people, Libyans, Carians, Nubians.²²

This inscription differs from the approach Darius takes in one of his Persepolis inscriptions. There, and following Cyrus' use of the Mesopotamian title of "King of the Four Quarters of the World," Darius quarters the empire:

[Aura Mazda] bestowed on Darius the king kingship over this wide earth, in which there are many lands: Persia, Media, and the other lands of other tongues, of mountains and plains, from this side of the sea to that side of the sea, from this side of the desert to that side of the desert.²³

Darius gives the centre of Persian power and territory – Persia and Media – and then simply groups all other lands as those belonging to "other tongues." These "other lands" are conceptually symmetrical, stretching to deserts either side of the Persian centre and to likewise bracketing seas.²⁴ Darius in the above

²⁰ The Caspians will be a repeated problem; for the double placement in the list of tax provinces, Laird (1921: 310) suggests a textual error. How and Wells (1912a: 284 on 3.92.2) suggest two groups of Caspians: those to the northeast grouped with the Saka (3.93.3) and those who lived northeast of Media on the southern Caspian shores (3.92.2). Asheri et al. (2011: 480 on 3.92.2) note that with the exception of the Caspians, the tribes mentioned in 3.92.2 are otherwise unknown. They then divide the two groups of Caspians into those of the Armenian area (3.92.2) and the "oriental Caspians" (3.93.3). Both Asheri et al. (2011: 491 on 3.93.3) and How and Wells (1912a: 285 on 3.93.3) connect the Caspians from 3.93.3 with the Caspians mentioned in 7.67 (infantry *ethnos*) and 7.86.1 (cavalry *ethnos*) rather than those mentioned in 3.92.2.

²¹ See Append. II to book 3 in Asheri et al. (2004).

²² XPh §2-3.

²³ DPg section 1.

²⁴ See Haubold (2012) on the role of the sea in Achaemenid imperial discourse, spatial politics, and images of world rule.

inscription groups the world into two – those of other tongues and Persia with Media – and quartered the Empire around Persia as marked by the limits of sea and desert; Xerxes groups everyone together under his rule and acknowledges no natural limit on his domain. Like Herodotus' list of tax provinces, Xerxes' list from Persepolis begins from a familiar point (Media and Elam for Xerxes, Ionia for Herodotus) before it begins a zig-zagging path linking the disparate parts of the Empire to one another.

Both Xerxes' and Herodotus' lists create a sense of overwhelming space, a geographical expanse too large to be ordered in the neat fashion of Darius' tax provinces, quartered earth, or the stages of the Royal Road on Aristagoras' map. The zig-zag movement of the list in Xerxes' Persepolis inscription above also creates a net of sorts, linking the provinces together as an imperial whole rather than the regional groups of the provinces next to one another around an imperial centre. The overall result of Herodotus' and Xerxes' semi-organized lists is a sense of comprehensiveness (“all kinds of men”) and overwhelming scope as the imperial space described brooks no limit but stretches across the “great earth far and wide.” This comprehensive, connected, vast sense of space that the list of tribute provinces and Aristagoras' map give cast Persian imperial territory and the administration that links it as one of the “great deeds” of the Empire. It turns Persian space into a *thōma*, a wonder, due to both the expanses involved and the administrative systems that turn those expanses into an empire.

We thus leave these two descriptions of Persian space from books 3 and 5 with two approaches to describing space: the orderly progression of the Royal Road which takes a regional approach and the semi-organized, zig-zagging movement of Herodotus' list of tax provinces. Aristagoras' Royal Road and Herodotus' correction of the route assert a partial view of the Persian Empire that is, at the same time, a view that also insists on the connectivity of the Empire's provinces. The Royal Road's existence, the orderly progression of staging posts, and the wealth that supports the tribute, all point to a larger imperial system that the partial view of the empire is a part of. Herodotus' list of tax provinces also nods to a larger imperial system that the tribute belongs and contributes to, but the semi-organized geographical order asserts a different view than that of Aristagoras' map. The Royal Road is small enough to know and describe in an orderly fashion (particularly considering only part of it is being described); the Empire as a whole, on the other hand, is far too vast to understand and describe in an orderly fashion. In his description of the review of Xerxes' army, however, Herodotus will accomplish a geographically sensible review of the Empire, focusing on the links among *ethnē* to organize the space of the empire. The result is a review of interconnected imperial space, one that asserts the vastness of the Empire and the great deeds involved in conquering and ordering that space.

3. XERXES' FORCES AND THE POPULATING OF IMPERIAL SPACE

To pause a moment in our analysis of Herodotus' depiction of Persian space, Aeschylus' *Persians*, which was one of the early memorials of the Greco-Persian Wars, also engaged with the question of how to depict the spaces and peoples of the Persian Empire. Relevant to this discussion are the lists of forces and territories given by the Chorus of Elders at the beginning of the play and the Messenger's lists of the Persian ethnic contingents at Salamis. The Chorus in their first ode (Aesch. *Pers.* 16-58) list the peoples "from all of Asia" (ἐκ πάσης Ἀσίας, 56-57) who follow, "yoked to the terrible procession of the king" (δειναῖς βασιλέως ὑπὸ πομπᾶις, 58), ten *ethnē* in total that move from the centre of the empire to Egypt, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. The Messenger's speech (Aesch. *Pers.* 302-330) expands the list to twelve peoples and nineteen commanders lost at Salamis that stretch from Bactria to Egypt, Arabia, back to Bactria, Anatolia, and Cilicia. The Chorus sketches out the western half of the Empire; the Messenger jumps from end to end. His jumbled order replicates the chaos of battle, but it also reinforces the sheer size and extent of the Persian Empire in much the same way that the semi-organized list of tax provinces encompasses the breadth of the Empire.

Herodotus' list of ethnic divisions in Xerxes' review of his army is another story. The full list of infantry, cavalry, fleet, and "most famous men" from the fleet covers forty chapters,²⁵ one sixth of book 7 as a whole. The historian gives numbers of men to enhance the size of the empire as perceived through the listing of *ethnē*;²⁶ the accompanying comments on dress, armour, and historical name changes include ethnographic details, turning the impending conquest of mainland Greece into an opportunity for ethnography as Herodotus reviews the peoples subject to the Persian King and their (military) customs. The list of ethnic divisions is a blend of ethnography and geography that, when accompanied with the organized presentation of the contingents, offers a view of Persian imperial space as vast, organized, and connected.

Herodotus breaks his account of Xerxes' army into the three traditional divisions of ancient armies: infantry, cavalry, and fleet, where the infantry contains the bulk of Xerxes' forces. The infantry contains contingents from the entirety of the Empire, while the cavalry comes from the centre and the edges; the fleet is entirely from the western half of the Empire that borders the Mediterranean, as is the list of the "most famous men" on board. The listings of infantry, cavalry,

²⁵ For general commentary on the *ethnē*, see Vannicelli et al. (2017: 365-416) and How and Wells (1912b: 151-164).

²⁶ As with the Royal Road and Darius' tribute provinces, Herodotus here too engages with Persian administrative discourses; see Blankenship (2022: 77-87) on.

and fleet all proceed according to an individual geographical scheme²⁷ that, when the three are examined in the aggregate, map out the space of the empire and its boundaries.

The infantry list covers forty-seven *ethnē*, though one is missing so forty-six are named in the extant text (7.61-80). There are six rough geographical groupings, with the second group comprising of two sub-groups and the fifth four inter-looping sub-groups. The groups are listed in table 3, along with their geographical positioning. As can be seen, Herodotus begins in the Persian heartland and surrounding power bases of Media, Babylonia, and Assyria before moving east, progressing from a rough northwest to southeast direction (groups 2-3) before crossing over to the southwest (group 4) and then up to the northwest (group 5). He then drops directly south to end with the peoples inhabiting the islands in the Red Sea. The exception to this geographical organization is the Ethiopians of Asia: they are mentioned with their western "twin" (the Ethiopians who dwell above Upper Egypt)²⁸ despite being arrayed with the Indians, presumably near to whom they are considered to dwell.

TABLE 3: INFANTRY *ETHNĒ* BY GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPING

Group 2 –the east– appears to divide into two unequal sub-groups. The first (Bactrians to Dadikai) moves in a rough circle, following a west-north-east-south direction of movement with the Bactrians to the Arians, before it spirals wider to continue that same general direction of movement as it picks up the peoples from the Parthians to the Dadikai. The movement of group 2a will be mirrored and expanded in the movements of the larger group 5 sub-groups, creating a rough complementarity of east and west. Group 2b is harder to map than 2a due to the uncertainties of the Paktyes. Beginning with the Caspians who likely are located to the south of the Caspian Sea, the historian then moves to the Sarangians who likely live around the Persian heartland (see 1.125 where they are included as a Persian nomadic tribe) and then either cuts across the Empire to Paktyes next to Armenia (to then move back east to pick up the Outians) or continues moving east to the Paktyes next to the Indians.²⁹ Group 3 continues the mapping of the east, hitting the northern Red Sea coast, and the historian then proceeds from the eastern limit to the western limit in the south with group 4 (Arabia to Libya) and

²⁷ For an alternate, aggregative geographical scheme from Xerxes' review of his forces, see Laird (1921: 310-311). He divides the infantry and cavalry into three groups: eastern (Persians to Paricanians), southwestern (Arabians, Ethiopians, and Libyans) and Asia Minor (Paphlagonians to Saspeires).

²⁸ On the twinning of the Ethiopians, see Nakassis (2004).

²⁹ How and Wells (1912a: 284 on 3.93.1) comment that the people of Paktyike in the tribute lists "adjoins Armenia and is obviously not the district of the same name which adjoined India" and their entry for the Paktyes in the list of army *ethnē* directs to the tribute list discussion (1912b: 155 on 7.67), suggesting that they consider the Paktyes from 7.67 to also be those who give the tribute "from Paktyike" (3.93.1) and to be next to Armenia.

in the north with group 5. This composite group begins along the southern Black Sea coast (Paphlagonia to Armenia), then the western coast of Anatolia (Lydia to the Asiatic Thracians); a lacuna breaks the list, possibly the Chalybes to the east of Paphlagonia or the Pisidians to the northeast of the Meionian Kabales; the latter is generally the preferred conjecture.³⁰ The southeastern coast is covered (Meionian Kabales to Milyans) before Herodotus ends group 5 by returning to the Caucasus with the Tibarenoi to the Saspeires.

Each *ethnos* is accompanied in Herodotus' narrative by some sort of ethnographic detail – usually their particular dress or armour³¹ – which often supplies an additional cognitive link joining the *ethnē* of each geographical grouping to one another. The Persians, Medes, Kissians, and Hyrcanians (Centre, group 1) all use Median dress (7.62), while the caps worn by the Bactrians are similar to those of the Medes (7.64.1) and link the first and second groups. The second group is essentially a double circle linked by commanders, dress (Areians to Dadikai use Bactrian dress and armour, 7.66.1), and the use of bows. A shared commander also links the Arabians and western Ethiopians (Arsames son of Darius and Arystone, 7.69.1), while the conceptual link with the western Ethiopians, as noted, brings the eastern Ethiopians over to group 4, out of geographical order. Dress and commanders link the first of the group 5 sub-groups, while the Armenians are claimed as colonists of the Phrygians (7.73). Commander and mother-daughter colony ties connect the Lydians and Mysians (7.74.2), the latter of whom helped drive the Asiatic Thracians from the Stymon to Bithynia (7.75.2). From the Meionian Kabales to Saspeires, *ethnē* are paired under commanders and share items of dress or armour (7.77-79). The final group has armour resembling the Medes (7.80), which visually links them to the initial central group with their Median dress despite the differences in geographical location.

The ethnographic details included in the review of the infantry differ from those Herodotus gives elsewhere in his own ethnographic discussions in one key way: the customs detailed here overwhelmingly have to do with war and, by extension, conquest. The “dress” is military dress and armour, as reinforced by the inclusion of helmet and shield types as well as the arms each *ethnos* bears. While the military focus of the ethnographic details fits the context of the passage Xerxes' review of his army before invading mainland Greece – it is at the same an ethnography in the Persian mode, one designed to explain and further the Persian *nomos* of conquest (7.8a).

³⁰ Following Waterfield (1998: 700 on 7.60-83) and Purvis (2007: 527 on 7.76.12), who follow Stein's conjecture for the lacuna. For further discussion, see Vannicelli et al. (2017: 387-388 on 7.76) and How and Wells (1912b: 157 on 7.76).

³¹ How and Wells (1912b: 151-152 on 7.61), following Macan, identify six classes of seventeen or eighteen types of armour in army and navy.

The same basic patterns identified with the infantry review hold also for the cavalry, whose groups are outlined in table 5. Here the ethnographic comments link back to the infantry, reinforcing the unity of the land forces and cavalry as well as that linking the ethnic divisions. These comments also continue the movement around the Persian Empire that the infantry review began.

TABLE 4: CAVALRY *ETHNĒ* BY GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPING

As with the infantry, Herodotus begins his review of the cavalry with the centre and the Persians, from whom he makes a brief jump east to the Sagartians as they speak the Persian language, and then he returns to the centre with the Medes and Kissians. Rather than encircling the Empire as the infantry divisions did, however, the cavalry mark the extremes from the central starting point of the Persian plateau. From the centre, Herodotus moves to the eastern limit of Persian influence (the Indians) before moving west to the opposite limit (the Libyans); these two extremes are paired through their use of chariots in battle. The final three divisions – Caspians (mentioned twice), Parikianians, and Arabians – all ride camels, and there is a general northeast to south movement here. The double mention of the Caspians in this list of contingents may be a textual error;³² How and Wells suggest accepting the emendation of καὶ Σάκαι for καὶ Κασπίοι in 7.86.1 to resolve the double mention and potential textual error.³³ Accepting this emendation would then admit the Sakai cavalry which gains distinction at Plataea to the cavalry list in book 7, from which they are otherwise absent. It would also create a northerly moving sweep of the eastern edge of the Persian Empire from Indians to Bactrians to the northern Sakai. Then in 7.86.2, there would be a movement from the edge of the Caspian sea south to the Parikianians and Arabians.

The fleet (table 5) completes the tour. Here Herodotus moves along the Mediterranean's eastern coast, encircling the eastern Mediterranean Sea. From the Phoenicians he moves down to the Egyptians, up to the island of Cyprus and over to Cilicia before following the Anatolian coast from the Pamphylians and Lycians up to the Hellespontines and Pontic region.

TABLE 5: FLEET *ETHNĒ* BY GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPING

By following the coastline, Herodotus roughly replicates sailing routes,³⁴ but he also, in moving from Egypt to Cyprus and Cilicia, encircles the Persian

³² See Vannicelli et al. (2017: 85 on 7.86.1) for a review of suggested emendations on 7.86.1; Wilson's *app crit.* gives emendations for Κασπίοι in 7.86.2. Note that Vannicelli et al. dagger Κασπίοι in 7.86.1, while Wilson daggers 7.86.2.

³³ How and Wells (1912b: 159 on 7.86.1); Vannicelli et al. (2017: 85 on 7.86.1).

³⁴ See Arnaud's map of ancient Mediterranean sailing routes (2005: 56-57) as well as his discussion through ch. 1 on Mediterranean sailing routes and the natural constraints dictating the direction of those routes. Herodotus' movement from the Phoenicians to Egypt corresponds with bidirectional sailing direction up and down the Levantine coast, as does his progression from Egypt to Cyprus. Routes from Cyprus to Cilicia and then west and north along the Anatolia

controlled waters of the Mediterranean, an area which the Athenians will try unsuccessfully to add to Delian League territory during Herodotus' composition of the *Histories*. The listing of marines on the ships balances the western focus of the fleet by returning the historian and his audience to the Persian centre (Persians, Medes) and northeastern limit (Sakai).

Herodotus' description of the Persian forces – infantry, cavalry, and fleet – is detailed and organized. The geographical order not only links neighbouring *ethnē* together (with a few exceptions that are due to ethnographic ties of language and dress) but also moves around the Empire in a geographically logical fashion. This movement, described by Vannicelli et al. as “una certa spirale,” moving from east to southwest to western Asia Minor and ending in the southern Red Sea islands,³⁵ presents Achaemenid imperial space as knowable and, at the same time, vast. The description of Xerxes' review of his forces thus offers a conceptual overview of the Persian Empire that overwhelms: each contingent represents a subject people or ally to the Persian King, and each have their place within the wider, conglomerate entity that is the Persian Empire. When combined with the “civilian” units of Darius' tribute lists from book 3, the units of the army, cavalry, and fleet offer an understanding of the Persian Empire as a system, a *kosmos* when all the parts are together and in place, which is what happens when Xerxes has his forces – drawn from the entirety of the Empire – parade before him. Furthermore, the detail of the review reveals the Persian Empire as a *kosmos* that encompasses the majority of the *oikoumenē* per Herodotus' description of the world's layout in 4.36-45.³⁶

The tribute lists in book 3 present the Persian Empire as having a fairly digestible set of twenty constituent units (the tax provinces) where each unit has a defining, dominant group alongside the other *ethnē* in that province. In contrast, there is no narrative break in the description of the army and fleet, excepting those identifying that the following contingents belong to the infantry, the next to the cavalry, and the last set to the fleet. For the infantry, then, Herodotus' audience must wait through the listing of forty-seven peoples with ethnographic details before the list pauses, only to add another eleven *ethnē*, pause, and the final thirteen *ethnē* of the fleet plus three of the marines before Herodotus ends his discussion with the corresponding “most famous men” (and one woman) of the fleet. Once the review of the army begins, the contingents of the Persian forces keep marching forward, inexorably, and as they keep coming, the mental map that the audience has of Persian space keeps expanding and keeps being

coast would take ships (as Herodotus' narrative takes his audience) up past Lycia, Greek settlements on the coast and island, into the Pontic region.

³⁵ Vannicelli et al. (2017: 80).

³⁶ On the Perso-centric nature of Herodotus' map of the *oikoumenē* from book 4, see Romney (2017: 869-872).

filled. Herodotus gives us the view of the army from the king's tent, watching contingent after ethnic contingent after contingent march by, overwhelming in the detail that Darius' schematic, aerial vision of empire lacks. "All of Asia" went to Greece, in the words of Aeschylus' Persian Elders (*Pers.* 56-57), answering the call of a king, who, in Herodotus' words, regarded "all of Asia" (to use Aeschylus' phrase) as the Persians' (1.4.4). The infantry contingents with the cavalry and fleet reinforce this perception of the Persian invasion force. Asian space is populated throughout the *Histories* until it is detailed in book 7 to such a degree that it looms large over the *poleis* of mainland Greece, a *kosmos* of united, connected parts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the buildup to the Ionian Revolt, the *logopoios* Hecataeus tried to dissuade Aristagoras' plan by "recounting all the *ethnē* of those Darius ruled and his power" (5.36.2). The attempt failed, and the cascade of effects that moves the second half of the *Histories* begins. Hecataeus' list of peoples falls, like the map Aristagoras will show Cleomenes, narratively between the details of Darius' tax provinces and those of Xerxes' full forces. By the time Herodotus has arrived at the opening salvos of the Ionian Revolt, his audience knows "all the *ethnē* of those Darius ruled," for Herodotus has already, himself, detailed them in far greater detail than he allows Hecataeus to in book 5. The list of tribute provinces and the tax they pay look forward to the quixotic force of Aristagoras' revolt,³⁷ while Xerxes' divisions then confirm the immensity of the peoples subject to the Persian King, the full consequences of the space represented on the map Aristagoras carries around. As a consequence, Herodotus' geographical knowledge stands superior to that presented by Hecataeus, Aristagoras, or the latter's Persian complement, Mardonius, who extols the fertility of Europe's soil to encourage Xerxes to invade (7.5.3). In the *Histories*, Mardonius exaggerates for rhetorical effect, but no one in the internal, Persian audience called foul, that Greece is not known for the *arete* of its soil, being mostly mountains with poor soil, because none of the Persians in Herodotus' narrative knew better.³⁸ From the Perso-centric map of the *oikoumenē* in book 4 through to Mardonius' comments in book 7, Europe is a blank space, the *terra incognita* of poet's tales (cf. 4.45.1, 4). Persian geographical knowledge is limited to the lands they have conquered, leading to a lack of ethnographic knowledge of the lands outside the Empire. Herodotus' lists of Persian space and ethnic contingents, however, show the opposite. His knowledge of Persian space, whether acquired through autopsy or

³⁷ Rood (2006: 295).

³⁸ See Haubold (2012: 99-102) for a review of historical Mesopotamian awareness of Greeks and Ionians.

from eyewitness informants, presents as accurate knowledge and precise. It is complete without conquest, nor does it need to be gained through conquest, as Persian geographical knowledge does.

The Persian Empire at the time of the composition of the *Histories* was one of the great nations that was formerly small (cf. 1.1.5). Its kings, elites, and army had accomplished “great deeds” as recorded in the *Histories*, and those deeds are overwhelmingly linked to the idea and management of empire. Herodotus records the building and monuments of Babylon and Egypt, physical *thōmata* that speak to the past stature of both peoples. Persia’s wonder, its *thōma*, is the Empire itself, the organization of “all of Asia” into a single, unified system that is knowable through its tax provinces and through the ethnic contingents that proceed, step by step and ship by ship, past Xerxes’ tent.

PERSIANS	PAKTYES	MYSIANS
MEDES	UTIANS	ASIATIC THRACIANS
KISSIANS	MYCIANS	PISIDAI†
HYRCANIANS	PARICANIANS	KABALIANS
ASSYRIANS	ARABIANS	MILYANS
BACTRIANS	ETHIOPIANS-BEYOND-	MOSCHIANS
SAKAI	-UPPER-EGYPT	TIBARENOI
INDIANS	ASIATIC-ETHIOPIANS	MAKRONES
ARIANS	LIBYANS	MOSSYNOIKOI
PARTHIANS	PAPHLAGONIANS	MARES
CHORASMIANS	LIGYANS	COLCHIANS
SOGDIANS	MATIENEANS	ALARODIANS
GANDARIANS	MARIANDYNIANS	SASPEIRES
DADIKAI	SYRIANS	THE DISPOSSESSED
CASPIANS	PHYRGIANS	
SARANGAE	LYDIANS	

PERSIANS	INDIANS	PAKTYES
SAGARTIANS	BACTRIANS	PARICANIANS
MEDES	SAKAI	
KISSIANS	LIBYANS	

PHOENICIANS	LYCIANS	HELLESPONTINES
PALESTINIAN-SYRIANS	DORIANS-FROM-ASIA	PERSIANS
EGYPTIANS	CARIANS	MEDES
CYPRIANS	IONIANS	SACAE
CILICIANS	ISLANDERS	
PAMPHYLIANS	AEOLIANS	

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