

PART TWO
HISTORIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER SIX

HERODOTUS

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Half-way through the *Histories* Herodotus tells of a journey that has far-reaching repercussions for the rest of the work—a trip to the Greek mainland made by Aristagoras, tyrant of Miletus, in the hope of gaining support for the Ionians’ planned revolt from Persian rule. Aristagoras went first to Sparta, where he tried to persuade Cleomenes, one of the Spartan kings, to invade Asia by showing him ‘a bronze chart on which was engraved a map of the whole earth’ (5.49.1) and by describing the various peoples through whom the Spartans would have to pass on their way to Susa. At their next meeting, Cleomenes first asked Aristagoras ‘how many days’ journey it was from the Ionian coast to the king’s palace’ (5.50.1); then, informed that ‘the journey inland would take three months’ (5.50.2), he indignantly told Aristagoras to leave before he had the chance to outline the route in detail. Aristagoras journeyed to Athens next, but the narrator cuts off to fill in the account of the route that Aristagoras was unable to offer Cleomenes (5.52–53, the Royal Road from Sardis to Susa). When he returns to Aristagoras, Herodotus explains how he persuaded the Athenians to send twenty ships—‘the beginning of misfortune for Greeks and barbarians alike’ (5.97.2).¹

Herodotus’ account of Aristagoras’ journey to Sparta and Athens is not just a turning-point in the narrative of the *Histories* as a whole, but also rich in material for a narratological analysis of space. In this chapter, analysis of this story will pull together some aspects of Herodotus’ treatment of space (my discussion will necessarily be highly selective given the strong thematic importance of space in Herodotus’ work).² Among

¹ Translations are (at times adapted) from Waterfield 1998a. I use ‘Herodotus’ as shorthand for ‘the Herodotean narrator’.

² There is already a large bibliography related to this topic: note e.g. van Paassen 1957, esp. 117–166; Bichler 2000; Bichler 2007; T. Harrison 2007; more detailed studies of Herodotus’ presentation of particular regions include Hartog 1988 on Scythia, Rollinger 1993 on Babylon, and Haziza 2009 on Egypt.

the issues that this episode raises are the importance of focalization and the difference between verbal and other ways of representing space. Above all, Herodotus' account of this episode lays bare one of the mechanisms that drives the treatment of space throughout the narrative—the link between geographical knowledge and military power. We start, though, by exploring some of the different levels at which the narrative's treatment of space operates.

Spatial Levels: From the Local to the Cosmic

What is the setting for Aristagoras' speech to Cleomenes? Herodotus reveals nothing—except that it is in Sparta: the two men simply came 'to words' (*es logous*, 5.49.1, 2). Again, when the day for Cleomenes' reply arrives, Herodotus reports only that the two men came together 'to the agreed place' (*es to sugkeimenon*, 5.50.1). As in many other conversational scenes (e.g. 3.80–82, the debate on the constitutions), Herodotus focuses on the words said rather than on the physical setting for those words. As the account of Aristagoras' stay in Sparta continues, however, Herodotus does become more specific in his handling of space. He first mentions that Cleomenes, after bidding Aristagoras leave Sparta, returned 'to his house' (*es ta oikia*, 5.51.1)—allowing us to infer that the earlier conversation had not been held there. He then reveals that Aristagoras went 'to Cleomenes' house' with a suppliant's branch—and it is in this private setting that two significant developments occur: firstly, Aristagoras attempts to bribe Cleomenes; secondly, Cleomenes' young daughter intervenes to stop him accepting the bribe. Herodotus still makes no attempt to describe Cleomenes' house: the relative precision about the setting is all that is required to contrast with the earlier meeting and to justify the intervention by the young girl. Other Herodotean scenes that one assumes took place indoors (e.g. 5.41.2, the Spartan ephors observing the wife of the Spartan king Anaxandridas giving birth)³ are not even given that degree of detail.

More attention is paid to internal space in oriental contexts. In his account of the uprising of the seven Persian conspirators against the false Smerdis and his brother, Herodotus brings out the steps by which the conspirators are able to penetrate the usurpers' inner sanctum: first

³ Cf. Garland 1990: 61 on childbirth in ancient Greece.

they are described on the road; then they reach the palace gates (where they get past the overly respectful guards); then they come into the courtyard (where they meet the suspicious eunuchs); finally they reach the main hall, and during the fighting one of the Magi ‘took refuge in a bedroom that led into the main hall’ (3.77–78—the description at 3.78.3, *ēn gar dē thalamos esekhōn es ton andreōna*, uses an imperfect tense, perhaps suggesting that it is focalized by the Magus).⁴ This elaborate sequence brings out the rulers’ seclusion—a practice shared by some other oriental rulers in Herodotus, but particularly important for the false Smerdis (cf. 3.68.2). Even here, however, it is the sequence of spaces that counts: there is no description of the rooms themselves. Herodotus is similarly spare in recounting scenes set in rulers’ bedrooms: Otanes’ daughter, for instance, is merely described as going *par’ auton* [viz. the false Smerdis] when she goes to sleep with him (3.69.6), while a bed is the only prop mentioned in the scene where Atossa pleads with Darius to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy (3.134.1). A telling exception is the first bedroom scene in the *Histories*, where slightly greater precision is required to bring out the moral topography of the punishment of Candaules for wanting to show off his wife naked (Candaules’ wife places Gyges by ‘the same door’, 1.12.1, that is, in the same spot as Candaules had placed him when he wanted to display her, to fulfil her planned revenge: ‘The place from where he showed me to you naked will be the place from which to launch the attack against him’, 1.11.5).⁵

To return to Aristagoras: the sparseness of Herodotus’ account of the setting for his conversations with Cleomenes is matched more broadly by the sparseness of his account of the city in which the conversations occur. When Aristagoras first arrives in Sparta, Herodotus does offer a resumé of Spartan history (5.39–48, picking up 1.65–68), but neither here nor elsewhere does he offer an account of the city itself. This lack of detail is in fact typical of Herodotus’ accounts of cities throughout the *Histories*. The only two detailed city-descriptions that he offers are, revealingly, for two cities in the Persian empire, Ecbatana and Babylon (1.98, 178–187), and even here city-description has a symbolic aspect, serving in part as a

⁴ For this use of the imperfect, cf. 1.126.1; 2.113.2; 6.102; 7.175, 8.33; also e.g. Ps.-Hanno 2, 4, 9, 12, 13; and cf. (→) Homer and (→) Thucydides.

⁵ Note also e.g. the phrase ‘the king’s house’, which is used several times in Herodotus and also has Persian parallels (e.g. Meiggs and Lewis [1969] 1988, no. 12 ll. 16–17; cf. Brock 2004: 173; Tuplin 2007: 792 n. lists Herodotean examples); or the description of eastern treasure-chambers (1.30; 2.121.a).

reflection on political systems: the excessively enclosed space of Ecbatana is constructed by the unapproachable tyrant Deioces, and a comparison between the sizes of the largest wall around Ecbatana and the wall around Athens (1.98.5) perhaps hints at the growing tyranny of the Athenian empire.⁶

Accounts of physical monuments (particularly dedications in sanctuaries) are the most significant exception to Herodotus' general reluctance to offer detailed accounts of cities.⁷ Buildings and other man-made structures are included amidst the great and marvellous *erga* that Herodotus set to describe, for instance the three 'great works' at Samos (3.60)—'a tunnel which was dug right through the bottom of a hill 150 fathoms high ...' (measurements are given for its length, height, and width, as well as for another channel dug along its length to carry water to the town); 'a mole in the sea, over two stades long, enclosing the harbour in water which is as much as twenty fathoms deep'; and 'the largest temple of all the temples we know' (its architect but no measurements are given). The narrator alleges that these monuments (which are described after the account of the history of Samos under Polycrates) are great enough to justify the length of the preceding treatment of the island's history—though this explanation may in fact be a pretext for the further spatial description. Such monuments do not generally form part of coherent descriptions of their physical settings: as we shall see, Herodotus prefers to build up a picture of sanctuaries piecemeal by describing successive dedications at a site.⁸

Herodotus' tendency to offer little specificity about space is also found in his treatment of journeys made by individuals. Aristagoras arrives at Sparta and then at Athens, with no detail given about his route. So too with other journeys: many characters made the journey between Sardis and Susa (e.g. Darius and Histiaeus at 5.25.1; a message at 5.32; a tattooed slave at 5.35.2), but in none of these cases is there any detail about the route followed. Similarly visitors from Greece or elsewhere in Europe arrive at Sardis with no attention paid to how they got there (e.g. 5.11–12, 24.2, 73, 96.2; 6.125)—though when travellers from Asia move across to Europe Herodotus is more likely to mention their crossing of

⁶ Cities: A.M. Bowie 2006: 122–129. Athens: Munson 2001: 90.

⁷ Cf. Erbse 1992: 146–156.

⁸ Note that further detail on the temple on Samos is offered at 4.88. Irwin 2009 offers a more politicised reading of Herodotus' Samos in relation to contemporary Athens.

the Hellespont (e.g. 5.11.1 [cf. the analeptic 12.1], 14.2, 23.1), a symbolic space that receives fuller elaboration in key military contexts (7.44–56 for Xerxes' crossing; 9.114–121).⁹ By the same narrative logic, spatial movements by single characters are treated with less detail than (actual or prospective) military movements by whole armies: Aristagoras' account of the peoples of Asia and the narrator's detailed account of the Royal Road are offered when the possibility of the Spartans following that route is raised.

While Herodotus pays little attention to the distribution of space within the sites he mentions, he does show some concern with their localization or with other geographical details. He typically offers such information paratactically through a new sentence, often in the form of the 'there is a place X' motif¹⁰ or again through a defining genitive, an appositional phrase (linked by a definite article or participle), or a relative clause.¹¹ Precision about location can also be combined with more incidental information: during the Ionian attack on Sardis, for instance, the Lydians and Persians on the acropolis poured out 'towards the river Pactolus, which brings gold-dust down from Mt Tmolus; it flows through the middle of the square and then discharges into the river Hermus on its way, and this into the sea' (5.101.2); here a concern for marvels (cf. 1.93.1) is combined with Herodotus' regular practice of providing information on the flow of rivers and in particular on where they enter the sea.¹²

Herodotus at times uses this type of geographical information for localized narrative effects. By locating Sigeum 'in Troas' and 'by the Sca-mander' (4.38.2; 5.65.3), for instance, he prepares for a later dispute over the town: when the Mytilenaeans demand return of Sigeum after Pei-stratus has seized it, the Athenians 'argued that Aeolians had no more right to the land of Ilium than themselves or any other Greeks who had helped Menelaus avenge the abduction of Helen' (5.94.2). The geographical markers for Sigeum act as seeds. In the account of Cambyses' route

⁹ Cf. also 3.56.2, 138.4 for strong markings of the Asia/Europe boundary in military contexts, and also the strong polarizing in the Persian account of the origin of hostilities at 1.4.4. For ways in which this geographical polarity is qualified, see Rood 2010a.

¹⁰ E.g. the Ionians decide to assemble 'at Lade; Lade is a small island off the city of Miletus'; 6.7; cf. e.g. 1.26.2, 76.1, 84.3; 2.169.4; 6.22.2, 47.2, 61.3; 7.59.1 and Kerschensteiner 1964; for a similar geographical example in an almost contemporary mythographer, cf. Pherecydes fr. 82a Fowler.

¹¹ Genitive: e.g. 1.46.2, 69.4. Participle: e.g. 1.82.2. Relative clause: e.g. 1.6.1; 3.91.1.

¹² Powell 1938 lists 41 instances of *ekdidōmi* in this sense in Herodotus.

to Egypt, by contrast, Herodotus exploits for immediate effect the symbolic force of myth: by noting that ‘the land onwards from Lake Serbonis (where the story goes that Typhos was buried) is Egyptian’ (3.5.3), he invites us to see Typhos as a mythical antecedent to the hybridic Cambyses.¹³

When Herodotus does employ large-scale descriptions of space, these descriptions tend to be in connection with the theme of imperialism (and particularly with Persian expansion). He generally describes foreign lands when they are attacked by an aggressor. At times, as in the Aristagoras scene, the account is given in the form of a single description of a proposed or actual route (e.g. 1.104, the route between Scythia and Media; 3.5, Cambyses’ route to Egypt; 5.17.2, the short route from Lake Prasias to Macedonia). Herodotus’ fullest descriptions of space occur when he offers a unified account of a country (geography, ethnography, and past history) as it comes under attack. These elements are found in varying degrees in his accounts of Cappadocia (1.72), Ionia (1.142–148), Caria, Caunus, and Lycia (1.171–173), and Babylonia (1.178–187, 192–200). Particularly notable are the accounts of Egypt in book 2 and of Scythia and Libya in book 4, where Herodotus goes beyond a linear concern with route to offer a more panoramic vision of the overall shape of a country or of its different regions (see below).

As well as being tied to the expansion of Persian power, Herodotus’ descriptions of countries combine to create a larger sense of cosmic space, with the patterns of balance and diversity between different countries (and particularly between Scythia in the north and Egypt in the south) offering a spatial corollary to the patterns of historical explanation at work in the narrative as a whole.¹⁴ That is to say, Herodotus’ analysis of the pattern of historical change as programmatically stated at the outset of the work (1.5.4: big cities become small, small cities become big) offers a unifying concept through which local variations may be understood, and this underlying conceptual unity across time is matched by Herodotus’ construction of space at a global level, where local diversities can be integrated into an overarching structure predicated on both variety and balance. This overarching structure is also articulated

¹³ This form is already used in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships, particularly for the Trojans’ allies (*Il.* 2.594, 850, 852, 857). On Typhos, cf. Dillery 2005: 392.

¹⁴ Cf. Gould 1989: 86–109; Munson 2001: 131–132. For Egypt/Libya and Scythia, see e.g. Redfield 1985; Hartog 1988: 14–19; Thomas 2000: 53–54, 56, 75–79. Cf. also 1.142.1–2 on the climate of Ionia as a mean between northern cold and southern heat.

through Herodotus' disquisitions on the margins of the inhabited world (esp. 3.106–116) and on the divisions of continents (2.16; 4.37–45) and seas (1.202.4; 2.23; 4.36.2).

The Geographical Style

Whatever the level of Herodotus' engagement with space, he often has recourse to a range of techniques for describing space that are found in Hecataeus of Miletus, who wrote a geographical *Periegesis* towards the end of the sixth century or the start of the fifth, and in other geographical writers.¹⁵ Hecataeus' work was an account of the places and peoples found along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Sea (as well as some inland areas and islands). The text itself survives only in fragments (*FGrH* 1), few of which offer much beyond names. Where Hecataeus' actual words are preserved, the style is typically simple, paratactic, and repetitive: 'the Cherronesians border the Apsinthians to the south' (F 163: *Apsinthioisi pros mesēmbrian homoureousi Kherronēsioi*); 'to this point the land of Becheirice; next to them the Chi ... up to them the Chi ... the Dizeres border the Chi to the east' (F 207: *es men touto hē Bekheirikē, ekhontai d' autōn Khoi ... mekhri men toutōn Khoi ... Khoisi d' homoureoisi pros hēlion aniskhonta Dizēres*); 'near the city Alazia is the river Odrusses, which flows out of Lake Dascylitis from the west through the plain of Mygdonia and empties into the Rhyndacus' (F 217, tr. Jones).

A particularly suggestive cluster of the sort of geographical expressions found in Hecataeus' work occurs in the scene where Aristagoras visits Sparta. Among the typical expressions used in the primary narrator's account of the route of the Royal Road are the second-person form *diexela(i)s* (5.52.2, 'you will pass through');¹⁶ the dative generalizing participles *diabanti*, *poreuomenō(i)*, *diexelasanti*, *esballonti*, and *anabainonti* (5.52.2–6, 'for a person crossing' or 'marching' or 'passing through' or 'entering' or 'going up'—a variant of the 'anonymous witness' device);¹⁷ and the repetitive mapping of space in terms of stages and parasangs

¹⁵ For Herodotus in his literary context, see R.L. Fowler 1996; on the early development of ancient geography, see van Paassen 1957; Jacob 1991; and Lanzillotta 1988.

¹⁶ See *SAGN* 1: 158 for second-person addresses as a feature of geographical writing.

¹⁷ See *SAGN* 1: 110 (and index). For geographical parallels, cf. e.g. *esionti* (1.51.1; 2.169.4), *parameibomenois* (1.104.1), *mesounti* (1.181.4), *perionti* (2.138.2); *espleonti* (3.90.2); *diabanti* (4.18.1, 4.19, 4.21); *huperbanti* (4.25.1); the device is also found in Hecataeus (*huperbanti*: F 169) and (→) Pausanias.

(‘stretching through Lydia and Phrygia are 20 stages, 94½ parasangs ... up to the Cilician borders 28 stages, 104 parasangs ...’).¹⁸ The use of these expressions itself creates a sense of spatial distance: in keeping with the general Greek tendency to be concerned mostly with the geography of difference,¹⁹ these expressions are most commonly used in contexts remote from the narratee’s presumed range of knowledge (in Herodotus’ account of Xerxes’ invasion of Greece, for instance, they largely drop out after the Persian army has passed through Thermopylae). The repetition of stages and parasangs also maps out the successive regions the Spartans would have to pass through, creating a sense of separate units that are themselves part of a larger whole (in modern terms, a sense of both experienced place and more abstract space).²⁰

Characteristically geographical expressions are used even more lavishly by Aristagoras in his meeting with Cleomenes, and again their effect is to create a strong sense of spatial distance. When he starts by saying that the peoples in Asia ‘live next to each, as I shall explain’ (5.49.5), the middle verb he uses, *ekhomai*, in the sense of ‘be next to’, is typical of geographical writing: it is found, for instance, in Hecataeus (F 207, quoted above) and in Herodotus’ account of the short route from Lake Prasias to Macedonia (‘first, next to (*ekhetai*) the lake, there is a mine ... and after the mine after crossing the mountain called Dysorum one is in Macedonia’, 5.17.2).²¹ And as he proceeds to use the verb a further four times he falls into a repetitive style (albeit with some variety) similar to Herodotus’ mapping of space through stages and parasangs: ‘these Phrygians to the east are next to (*ekhontai*) the Lydians ... The Cappadocians are next to (*ekhontai*) the Phrygians ... The Cilicians border on (*prosouroi*) them, stretching down to this sea ... These Armenians are next to (*ekhontai*) these Cilicians ... and the Matieneans to the Armenians ... This land Cissia is next to (*ekhetai*) them ...’ (5.49.5–7). Aristagoras also follows the geographical tradition by showing an interesting in naming (‘the Cappadocians, whom we call Syrians’)²² and by mov-

¹⁸ For such repetition, cf. Rood 2010a: 55, with n. 17.

¹⁹ Hartog 1988, esp. 212–225; Cole 2010: 206–212.

²⁰ For measurements in terms of the time taken to travel a route, cf. 1.72.3, 104.1; 2.34.1 (with the expression *euzōnō(i)*, ‘for a man travelling light’); 3.26.1 (seven days’ journey across sand).

²¹ For *ekhomai*, cf. Powell 1938, s.v. *ekhō*, C.I (46 uses in Herodotus).

²² For Herodotus’ varied interest in naming, cf. 7.201 (differences between people: most Greeks call ‘Thermopylae’, *epikhōrioi* and *perioikoi* call ‘Pylae’); 1.1 (difference over time: ‘in what is now called Hellas’); 3.26.1 (meaning in foreign languages: Oasis is ‘the Isles of the Blessed’ in Greek). Cf. the Homeric interest in divine and mortal names.

ing from the coast to neighbouring islands. The peoples themselves are described with another mode of expression characteristic of geographical writers—superlatives:²³ *poluargurōtatoi*, *poluprobatōtatoi*, *polukar-potatoi*—they are ‘most rich in silver/flocks/crops’ (5.49.5); through Aristagoras Herodotus offers a pastiche of this superlative mode of expression, turning it into a crude version of ethnography tailored towards his goal of enticing Cleomenes into Asia.

When Aristagoras and the narrator describe the distance between Sardis and Susa, they also follow the practice of other Greek geographers by adopting a Mediterranean-centred perspective: the route is mapped from the Aegean coast to the interior. This perspective is not in itself surprising when a possible Spartan invasion of Asia is being discussed, but it is also the perspective that shapes Herodotus’ narrative throughout the *Histories*. While Herodotus’ proem balances the great deeds done by both Greeks and barbarians, his first *logos* establishes the dominant spatial perspective: the Phoenicians ‘came to this sea from what is called the Red Sea’ (1.1.1). The deictic *tēnde* (‘this’) is a mark of Herodotus’ Mediterranean focus, and particularly striking since the story is attributed to Persians (who lived closer to the Red Sea than to the Mediterranean). ‘This’ sea is also implicitly opposed to other seas that are ‘southern’ (the Indian Ocean), ‘northern’ (the Black Sea), or ‘outside the Pillars of Hercules.’²⁴ Herodotus adopts this same spatial perspective as he locates places or peoples as ‘on the right/left to one sailing into the Hellespont’ (3.90.2; 6.33.1: *espleonti*—viz. from the Mediterranean) or through phrases such as ‘above’ (where we would say ‘north’),²⁵ or as he describes the journey through Egypt ‘for one travelling up’ the Nile (2.97.2, 155.1: *anapleonti*).²⁶ This perspective is also implicit in broader Greek naming-practice: the

²³ For the ethnographic superlative, cf. 2.77.1; 3.8.1, 20.1; 4.93, 183.4, 187.3; van Paassen 1957: 161–162; Bloomer 1993; also e.g. Ctesias *FGH* 688 F 45 §§ 16, 21, 23, 43, 45, 47, 48; Diodorus Siculus 3.28.3, 35.7.

²⁴ For the ‘outside’ sea, see 1.202.4; for ‘northern’, 4.37 (though more often of the Mediterranean in relation to Africa: 2.11.3, 32.4, 158.4, 159.1; 4.42.2); ‘southern’ (sometimes also explicitly ‘Erythraean’), 2.11.3, 158.4; 3.17.1; 4.37, 42.3 (though at 4.13.2 the same phrase focalized by Aristaeas signifies the Black Sea); for ‘this sea’, cf. also 4.39.2, 41; note also ‘Greek sea’ at 5.54.2; 7.28.2.

²⁵ E.g. 5.5 *tōn katuperthe Krēstōnaiōn oikeontōn* (where Waterfield translates ‘the tribes to the north of Crestonia’); Powell lists 30 (adverbial and prepositional) uses of *katuperthe* in the sense ‘inland’; cf. the use of *enerthe* (‘below’) in the sense ‘seawards of’ (six occurrences, all in the account of Egypt). Note that Herodotus does also use the north wind for orientation (e.g. 5.9.1), as well the rising, midday, and sinking sun and the Arctus constellation.

²⁶ Cf. also *anō ionti* at 2.7.1, 8.1, 29.2.

stretch of sea between the Aegean and the Black Sea (the Pontos), for instance, was known as the Propontis—‘the Fore-sea’—even when it was described from a Pontic perspective (‘the Bosphorus stretches to the Propontis; and the Propontis ... opens into the Hellespont’, 4.85.3–4).

The dominance of the Greek perspective is also suggested by Herodotus’ use of analogies between the familiar and the less familiar. As we have seen, the size of the wall-circuit at Ecbatana is compared with Athens (1.98.5). So too the shape of the Crimea is compared with that of Cape Sunium or southern Italy (4.99.4–5); the Araxes has islands within it said to be the size of Lesbos (1.202.1); the distance from the Egyptian coast to Heliopolis is said to be the same as that ‘from the Altar of the Twelve Gods in Athens to the temple of Olympian Zeus in Pisa’ (2.7.1); one portion of the Nile is as crooked as the Meander (2.29.3); and a sacred lake in Egypt is the same size as a lake on Delos (2.170.2).²⁷ More indirectly, by claiming that a bronze vessel in Scythia is six times the size of a bowl dedicated by Pausanias at the mouth of the Black Sea, and then proceeding to describe the Scythian vessel ‘for the sake of anyone who has not seen Pausanias’ bowl’ (4.81.3–4), Herodotus presents the entrance to the Black Sea as a liminal area by contrast with the still more marginal lands of Scythia.

The centrality of the Aegean region is established in other ways too. In terms of climate, Ionia is defined as a medium between extremes: ‘these Ionians ... have founded their cities in the finest spot of all the people we know of: neither the lands to the north and south [lit. ‘up and down’] are like Ionia, for some of them suffer from the cold and rain, while others are oppressively hot and dry’ (1.142.1–2). Later in the work the spatial implications of this finely balanced climate are reasserted in a discussion of the margins of the world: ‘the extremities of the inhabited world were allotted the finest features, just as Greece was allotted much the most finely mixed seasons’ (3.106.1); picking up his earlier account of the long-lived Ethiopians, said to be ‘the tallest and most beautiful of all people’ (3.20.1), Herodotus now describes Arabia with its strange spices (3.107–111) and India with its gold-gathering ants (3.102), the furthest inhabitable land to the east (beyond lies sandy desert, 3.98.2). He offers a picture of the world as balanced, with the fineness of the Greek climate at the centre

²⁷ Cf. Hartog 1988: 225–230. Note also e.g. how the outer wall at Babylon is compared with a breastplate (1.181.1); and that Herodotus can also introduce comparisons between two non-Greek items (e.g. Babylonian and Egyptian irrigation, 1.193.2).

matching the marvels at the world's extremes.²⁸ The centrality of Greece is also asserted by the increasing uncertainty of geographical knowledge as one moves away from the Greek centre: Herodotus describes northern lands where locals say that a proliferation of feathers, or bees, prevents further travel (4.7; 5.10; cf. also 3.115–116).²⁹ These uncertain edges are also part of Herodotus' moral geography: Cambyses is first said to plan an expedition against 'the long-lived Ethiopians, who live in Libya, on the coast of the southern sea' (3.17.1), but when he starts on the expedition itself Herodotus stresses that he had 'not considered the fact that he was intending to make an expedition to the ends of the earth' (*es ta eskhata gēs*, 3.25.1); the vaguer phrasing (together with the seed planted by the presentation through negation in the second passage) underlines Cambyses' folly.

Maps and Texts

Another medium in which the Aegean was marked as central was the Greek map—like the one that Aristagoras displays at Sparta. Herodotus does not describe the map itself; he uses it, rather, to suggest a number of differences between verbal and visual presentations of space. For one thing, Aristagoras is not described as displaying the map at Athens—doubtless because of the difficulty of showing it to a whole assembly rather than just one interlocutor.³⁰ More tellingly, Herodotus uses the map to bring out the vagueness of Aristagoras' presentation of space. Cleomenes is unable to extrapolate from the abstract space of the map a sense of how long it would take to march along the route. Aristagoras' misguidedly honest reply in turn becomes the excuse for a virtuoso display by the narrator, as he maps the route along the Royal Road in terms of stages (*stathmoi*) and parasangs, including even measurements in half-parasangs (5.52–53). After stating that Aristagoras' estimate was right, Herodotus even corrects himself and notes that one has also to take account of the trip from Ephesus to Sardis, thereby adding an extra three

²⁸ For Herodotus' account of margins, see Fehling 1989: 97–104; Fehling 1994; Nesselrath 1995; also Rood 2006a: 297–298 for Herodotus' relativizing of the opposition between centre and margins.

²⁹ Cf. Fehling 1989: 101, who sees Herodotus' three zones (known, fabulous, unknown) as part of his rhetoric of credibility.

³⁰ Pelling 2007: 184.

days to the three-month journey (5.54). The passage is a bravura exercise in narratorial control that also implicitly relates such measuring to issues of domination: we think of Darius measuring the Pontus (4.85–86) or of Xerxes measuring his army by having successive groups occupy a space that can fit 10,000 men (7.60).³¹

Herodotus also prompts reflections on the differences between texts and images through Aristagoras' claim to the totality of his map's spatial representation: it shows 'the whole earth'—'every stretch of sea and all the rivers.' This claim seems to clash with the necessarily restricted presentation of space in the narrative itself. Herodotus as narrator cannot offer the same totality of representation as the map: in discussing the rivers of Scythia, for instance, he writes that 'there are almost as many rivers flowing through it as there are canals in Egypt' and that 'I will name (*onomaneō*) the notable rivers (*onomastoi*), those which can be sailed up from the sea' (4.47.2—he lists eight). Aristagoras' total representation of space seems in turn to be linked with his appeal to a total imperialism: 'When you could easily make yourselves the rulers of *all Asia*, how could you choose another option?' (5.49.8). The language of ruling 'all Asia' does recur at other points in the *Histories*,³² but it seems especially compelling when 'all Asia' can be grasped in a single view by the character within the text. Yet the vision of 'all Asia' offered by the map is necessarily selective, like Herodotus' own narrative: maps cannot show everything. And the narrator significantly juxtaposes this vision with another form of totality—the 'total necessity' imposed by some of the barriers in the path of the invader of Asia: 'Phrygia ends at the river Halys, where there are gates which it is a total necessity (*pasa anagkē*) to pass through to cross the river; there is also a substantial guard-post at the Halys. ... Matiene has four navigable rivers flowing through it, which there is a total necessity (*pasa anagkē*) to cross by ferry' (5.52.2–4). Herodotus' own presentation of the route strikes a very different note from Aristagoras' manipulative exploitation of the map.

The different perspectives of Aristagoras and the narrator are further highlighted by the way they use similar geographical styles to contrasting ends. While Aristagoras focuses on the riches to be won in Asia, Herodotus is much more precise about the length of the journey and

³¹ Cf. Konstan 1987 for Persians' concern for size; Christ 1994 for royal measuring and enquiry.

³² Cf. T. Harrison 2007: 50; note also e.g. 1.130.3.

about the obstacles in the way.³³ The narrator's alternative account of space seems designed to counter the character's over-optimistic view: he fills in the details that Aristagoras was prevented from giving to Cleomenes, but not perhaps in the way that Aristagoras himself would have done. The difference between the two accounts is best seen in their descriptions of Susa. Aristagoras reports that 'Susa itself lies on the banks of this river here in Cissia, which is called the Choaspes. Susa is where the Great King usually lives, and where the treasures are, with all this wealth. All you have to do is capture Susa, and your wealth would undoubtedly challenge that of Zeus!' (5.49.6). The narrator, by contrast, alludes to a stretch of road that 'goes up to the Choaspes (another river which is deep enough to be navigable), where the city Susa has been built (*polis pepolistaí*)' (5.52.6). Whereas Herodotus calls Susa a *polis*, Aristagoras defines it purely in terms of the wealth stored there—the final source of temptation in the long trek away from the Mediterranean.

Herodotus' account also disturbs the contrast between map and text. Though it exposes the whole of Asia to a single view, the cartographic representation of space offered by Aristagoras' map itself needs interpretation. Furthermore, the map serves as a supplement to, not a replacement for, a hodological perspective:³⁴ Aristagoras points to the relevant spaces on his map as he describes in words the peoples encountered on the route to Susa. The problem with his map lies not in the nature of cartography per se, but in the crude way in which he tries to exploit the map for a political purpose that the narrator finds suspicious.

Aristagoras' use of a map may also serve as a comment on the way in which space is integrated in Herodotus' analysis of patterns of imperial expansion. Herodotus' more robust account of Asia may offer a sceptical riposte to the panhellenic fantasies expressed in Aristagoras' fanciful description.³⁵ Yet the narrator's accounts elsewhere in the *Histories* are marked by a tension over their relation to characters' imperial drives.³⁶ On the one hand, they offer a form of resistance to the onward march of the narrative, a temporary halt to the progress of Persian expansion; and the Scythian geography in particular highlights the impossibility

³³ Cf. Flower 2000: 70–73; Rood 2006a: 295–296.

³⁴ Cf. Purves 2010: 132–138, 144–150, on the opposition of the cartographic and hodological in relation to Aristagoras (my emphasis is slightly different); also e.g. Bichler 2007: 74–76; Pelling 2007.

³⁵ Cf. Flower 2000: 70–73; Rood 2006a: 295–296.

³⁶ Cf. Payen 1995; Rood 2006a: 294.

of the Persians' gaining control of a land that seems particularly suited for nomads.³⁷ At the same time they bring out the magnitude of the Persians' conquests, justifying Herodotus' initial claim that his enquiries deal with great and marvellous deeds; indeed, the account of Egypt sets the Persians' conquest in the context of earlier expeditions (notably Egyptian invasions of Asia) while also self-consciously alluding to the way earlier rulers have imposed themselves on the landscape as a form of self-commemoration.³⁸

That Herodotus is not hostile to the cartographic mode in itself is shown by the way his own narrative is frequently structured not by the hodological idea of the route but by the interrelation between different spatial units. A good illustration of this tendency is supplied by his description of Babylon (1.178–187). Herodotus describes first the size and shape of the city: 'it is situated on a huge plain, and the length of each of its sides (it forms a square) is 120 stades', giving a circumference of 480 stades (1.178.2).³⁹ His account then moves progressively from the outside in, not via a pedestrian route but through a series of smaller enveloping spaces. He describes first 'a wide, deep moat, full of water, surrounding the whole city', and then 'a defensive wall'. After interrupting the purely spatial description (in the (→) Homeric manner) to describe how the moat and wall were built, with a neat balance in the use of earth dug from the moat for the wall (1.179; cf. 1.185.4), he then notes that the city is divided into two districts by the Euphrates and further protected by an inner wall. His account then moves progressively towards the centre: 'In the middle of one of the two districts of the city stands the royal palace, surrounded by a tall, strong wall, and in the centre of the other there is a bronze-gated sanctuary ... In the middle of the sanctuary has been built a solid tower, a stade long and the same in width, which supports another tower, which in turn supports another, and so on ... In the last tower there is a huge temple' (1.181.2–5). This panoramic description invites the narratee to construct a mental image of how the city would appear seen from above. A similar move away from a purely hodological view of space is found in Herodotus' account of Egypt and Scythia. His

³⁷ Hartog 1988: 34–60; Purves 2006.

³⁸ For Sesostrius' expeditions into Asia (generally seen as Egyptian invention to counterbalance the Persian conquest), see 2.102–103, 106; for Darius' failed attempt to set up a statue, cf. 2.110.2–3; note also 2.158.1 (canal).

³⁹ For other circumference measurements, cf. 1.93.5, 163.4, 185.4; 2.15.3, 41.5, 149.1; 7.109.2.

account of these lands is rich in internal differentiation between different sorts of cultural zone.⁴⁰ He also includes details about their dimensions and shapes: Scythia is square (4.99–101), while the width of Egypt varies along the Nile (2.5–9).

Piecemeal Description

The opposition between cartographic and hodological space is further complicated by the technique of the piecemeal description of geographical information. This technique is employed in the course of an account of campaigns, for instance in the early stages of Darius' invasion of Scythia,⁴¹ and more fully in Xerxes' invasion of Greece; the information takes the form both of geographical detail about places along the route and of discussion of possible routes.⁴² In itself this technique might be thought to reflect a hodological perspective. And yet the very disjointedness that results in Herodotus' account of Scythia contributes to his broader mapping of space. His account is marked by an opposition between Scythia and Egypt (and/or Libya) that is predicated on the idea of a balance between polar opposites. This contrast is taken further by the opposition between the looser structure of the Scythian *logos* and the more formal structure for Egypt. Herodotus makes a number of (not totally compatible) attempts to describe Scythia, basing his descriptions partly on the model of a coastal *periplous*, with rivers used as a way of anchoring the different Scythian peoples living by the coast and inland (4.17–36, 47–58), partly on more abstract cartographic modes (4.99–101);⁴³ he offers no historical overview of the land apart from the different accounts of Scythian origins. The account of Egypt, by contrast, is more regular, with successive sections on the geographical structure of the land, the customs of the people, and the accomplishments of a long list of kings.

⁴⁰ Cf. Shaw 1982–1983 on Scythia.

⁴¹ See 4.85–86 (Pontus), 90, 92, 93 (rivers in Thrace), 99–101 (shape of Scythia), 123.2–3.

⁴² Detail: 7.26.3 (Celaenae), 30.1 (salt marsh, Colossae), 30.2 (boundary marker), 33–34 (Abydos), 42.1–2, 43, 58.2–3, 59.1–2, 112, 113, 115; 8.31, 32.2, 33 (temple of Apollo at Abae). Route: e.g. 7.31 (split), 198–200 (approaches to Thermopylae).

⁴³ Cf. Dewald 1998: 647 for the *periplous* model (also 660 for a parallel with 4.168–178, the arrangement of the Libyan ethnography along the coast from east to west); Hartog 1988: 344–349 on the tension between concrete and geometric space.

It is not that the account of Egypt is lacking in piecemeal description. By embedding descriptions of physical monuments in the historical narrative of the Egyptian kings who built them, Herodotus offers an ordered but gradually unfolding picture of the topography of a site. The result can be traced in relation to the sanctuary of Hephaestus (Ptah) at Memphis.⁴⁴ Herodotus first describes it as ‘huge and remarkable’ (2.99.4: *mega te kai axiapēgētaton*) when it was constructed by Min, the first king of Egypt. Then a ‘northern gateway’ in the sanctuary is constructed by Moeris, last of the 330 kings after Min, who wanted to display ‘a monument’ (2.101.2: *mnēmosuna*). A later king, Sesostris, used conquered peoples to haul large blocks of stone for the sanctuary (2.108.2) and left as ‘monuments’ (*mnēmosuna*) ‘in front of the Hephaestaeum’ ‘two stone statues thirty cubits in height of himself and his wife, and statues of his four sons too, each twenty cubits in height’ (2.110.1); similarly Rhampsinitus ‘left as monument (*mnēmosuna*) the western gateway of the Hephaestaeum, and erected two statues facing this gateway, each of which is twenty-five cubits in height’ (2.121.1), while Asychis ‘built the eastern gateway for Hephaestus, which is the most magnificent and by far the largest’ (2.136.1; Herodotus adds that ‘all the gateways have figures carved on them and countless other marvels of construction, but this one easily outdoes the others’). Another addition was made by Sethos: ‘A stone statue of this king still stands in the sanctuary of Hephaestus with a field-mouse in his hand’ (2.141.6). Later, Psammetichus ‘built the southern gateway for Hephaestus’ (2.153), while among Amasis’ dedications is ‘the 75-foot figure which is lying on its back in front of the Hephaestaeum in Memphis’ (2.176.1). Throughout book 2, then, Herodotus makes a sustained attempt to locate successive buildings at Memphis in relation to the Hephaestaeum, perhaps to support his claim that he personally travelled there.⁴⁵ The piecemeal description then continues in the narrative of Cambyses’ campaign, when Herodotus describes the cult statue of Hephaestus that Cambyses mocks (3.37.2).

⁴⁴ So too for the pyramids (2.124–125, 127, 134.1, 136.3–4) and labyrinth (2.148). Exceptional are the accounts of the ‘remarkable’ (2.137.5) sanctuary of Bubastis (2.138) and of Lake Moeris (2.149–150, anticipated at 2.101.2), which are added by association. Contrast how for Scythia (a few) physical monuments are described within the ethnographic section: 4.3.2 (trench), 71 (royal tombs), 81 (bronze vessel); note also monuments resulting from Darius’ expedition (4.87, *stēlai* set up by Darius at Bosphorus, though later carried off by the Byzantines; 91, *stēlē* at river; 92, mound of stones at another river; 124.1, forts left unfinished).

⁴⁵ For priests as informants, see 2.2.5, 2.3.1.

The technique of piecemeal description is also applied to Greek sanctuaries. The location of many dedications at Delphi is described throughout the work, though no single building plays the same structuring role as the Memphis Hephaestaeum.⁴⁶ A less prominent example is Herodotus' presentation of the sanctuary of Abae. This sanctuary is first localized through a genitive of definition ('belonging to the Phocians') in the list of oracles that Croesus tests (*Abas tōn Phōkeōn*, 1.46.2). Knowledge of its Phocian location is then presupposed at 8.27.4–5, where Herodotus describes the Phocians making dedications there and at Delphi. The greatest detail about the shrine, however, is delayed until it is burnt down by the Persians ('Abae, where there was a rich sanctuary of Apollo, well stocked with treasuries and many votive offerings', 8.33); the basic fact of the sanctuary's Phocian location is then repeated at its final appearance (8.134.1, similar in form to 1.46.2).

Space and Focalization

The progressive revelation of spatial information can also be tied to issues of focalization. Following Darius' failed invasion of Scythia, Herodotus reports that as a reward for loyalty Histiaeus asked for 'Myrcinus in the land of the Edonians, wanting to found a city in it' (5.11.2). But when the Persian governor Megabazus found out that Histiaeus was fortifying the site, he rebuked Darius for allowing a Greek 'to found a settlement in Thrace, where there is a limitless supply of timber for shipbuilding, where there are plenty of spars for oars, and where there are silver mines too' (5.23.2). The additional detail about Myrcinus is given when there is a threat that Histiaeus may set himself up as leader over Greeks and Thracians (cf. 5.3.1 for the danger of the Thracians getting a leader). De Jong (2001b: 114–115) has offered a similar reading of the piecemeal distribution of spatial information in the account of Xerxes' invasion of Greece: 'Herodotus chose to present the geographical

⁴⁶ Locations for Delphic offerings include: the Corinthian treasury (1.14.2, 50.3, 51.3; 4.162.3); the Clazomenian treasury (1.51.2); the temple of Athena Pronaia (1.92.1); 'the tripod in front of the temple' (8.27.5); 'the bronze three-headed serpent very close to the altar' (9.82.1); 'behind the altar which the Chians dedicated and in front of the actual altar' (2.135.4); in the same place as other offerings (1.14.3; 8.122.1); or unspecified (1.31.5). For other sanctuaries, cf. e.g. 5.59–61 (temple of Apollo in Thebes). Cf. Crane 1996: 163–208; also Purves 2010: 150–158 for a discussion of Delphi as an intersection that binds the narrative.

information about Greece in close connection with Xerxes' march through that country' so as to show 'the process by which this Persian king gradually gets to know Greece'. This is a good suggestion in itself—though as the expedition advances into central Greece Herodotus prefers not to repeat geographical information presumed to be familiar to the narratee. At the same time, throughout the Plataea narrative in book 9 the piecemeal description technique, with spatial descriptions interwoven with characters' considerations of strategy, is used for the reasoning of both Persians and Greeks as the two armies shift camp more than once before finally engaging.⁴⁷ Besides this, a unified account of Greece would also run counter to the dominant thread of the narrative—Herodotus' analysis of the constant Greek temptation towards fragmentation and internal disunity. One of the spatial questions Herodotus is concerned to pose is precisely the meaning of 'Greece'.⁴⁸

Focalization is important for understanding other aspects of Herodotus' treatment of space. We have already noted in the account of Aristagoras' visit to Sparta that character and narrator offer very different accounts of Asia. Aspects of focalization play a key role in other scenes too: characters often present highly dubious claims about geographical facts such as distance and size. At 5.13.2, for instance, the Paeonian brothers trying to tempt Darius tell him that Paeonia is not far away (*ou prosō*); Herodotus' account as a whole suggests that terms such as 'near' and 'far' are inherently open to interpretation (see e.g. 5.80, an oracle on nearness that the Thebans interpret as relating to kinship, not physical distance).⁴⁹ Factual claims on size are also open to question: at 5.106.6 Histiaeus wrongly calls Sardinia 'the largest island';⁵⁰ Aristagoras tempts a Persian governor by saying that Naxos was 'not a large island', but was 'exceptionally beautiful and fertile, lay close to the Ionian coast, and

⁴⁷ See 9.13.3 (Mardonius moves from Attica, which is not suitable for cavalry, to Boeotia, which is), 19.3–20 (the Greeks do not come down to the plain—because of the Persian cavalry, as is more strongly suggested at 9.25), 25.2 (the Greeks move camp to a site with better water access), 39.1 (details on the Cithaeron pass where Mardonius sends his cavalry), 43.2 (Herodotus explains about the river Thermodon), 51.1–3 (the Greeks move to an island near Plataea).

⁴⁸ Note the broad geographical definition of 'Hellas' at 1.92.1; 2.182.1. The exception that proves the rule is Sparta, commonly interpreted as an 'internal other', where Herodotus does offer a quasi-ethnographic account; but this account in any case focuses on the institution of the dual kingship rather than the geography of Sparta itself.

⁴⁹ For physical distance, cf. 6.108.3 on Plataea.

⁵⁰ Though as Asheri 2007: ad loc. notes, this error was made by others in antiquity.

was rich in property and slaves'; and that from Naxos and neighbouring islands he could attack Euboea, 'which is a large, prosperous island, at least as big as Cyprus and easy to take' (5.31.1–3). Here, as in his speech at Sparta, Aristagoras' presentation of space is tied to potential military expeditions. So too when Mardonius tries to persuade Xerxes to invade Greece, he adds to his 'argument for retaliation' the additional argument 'that Europe was a particularly beautiful place, where every kind of cultivated tree grew and the soil was excellent' (7.5.3).⁵¹

The influence of focalization on Herodotus' modes of spatial description is also seen in his use of a wide range of different stylistic and narrative registers. Aristagoras' totalizing language of 'the whole of Asia' also appears in Astyages' dream that a vine grew from his daughter's genitals and 'overshadowed the whole of Asia' (1.108.1); the key opposition between Europe and Asia is evoked when Cyrus dreams of 'Hystaspes' eldest son with wings growing out of his shoulder-blades; with one wing he cast a shadow over Asia, with the other he overshadowed Europe' (1.209.1). The important opposition between mainland and islands can be expressed through an oracle ('If Zeus had wanted an island, he would have made an island', 1.174.5) or through a pointed saying (the wise adviser Bias makes Croesus abandon his plan to sail against islanders by suggesting that 'the islanders are jointly buying ten thousand horses' for an attack on Sardis—which is exactly what Croesus would want; so too, he concludes, the islanders would like to catch the Lydians at sea, 1.27). Elsewhere, the strategic advantages of Byzantium over Chalcedon are conveyed through a saying that the Persian Megabazus 'left as an immortal memory': 'the Chalcedonians must have been blind for all that time, because otherwise they wouldn't have chosen to settle in a worse place when a more attractive one was available' (4.144.2). The diversity of Herodotus' spatial modes is further shown by the contrasting ways in which simple explanations can be offered: the fact that 'Attica is well south of Lemnos' explains why the Pelasgians are willing to offer Lemnos to the Athenians if they sail from their own territory to the island by a north wind in a single day (6.139.4—an offer fulfilled after Miltiades' conquests in the Chersonese); again, the fact that 'Syria is on Egypt's borders (*homoureei*)' is mentioned in a piece of Homeric exegesis in which Herodotus argues that mention of Paris' putting in to Sidon shows that Homer knew of Paris' journey to Troy via Egypt (2.116.6). In these two

⁵¹ For narratorial comments on beauty, cf. 5.42.3; 6.24.2.

passages we see Herodotus underscoring fairly elementary geographical information for the sake of local narrative effects. A similar diversity, finally, can be seen in Herodotus' comment that his view of the extent of Egypt is confirmed by an oracle that was consulted by citizens of an area in the part of Egypt bordering on Libya who did not like following Egyptian religious observances: the oracle avowed that 'any land watered by the Nile in flood was Egypt' (2.18.3).

Conclusion

We have seen, then, that narratological analysis can help to tease out both the localized variety of Herodotus' treatment of space and the ambivalent relationship of Herodotus' long spatial descriptions to the pattern of imperialism scrutinized in the narrative as a whole. Space has been profitably analysed in relation both to time (when are spatial details presented?) and focalization (how are they presented?); at the same time, we have seen the importance of reading Herodotus against the tradition of geographical writing in prose. It remains to be seen whether the same is true on a lesser level with the generally smaller spatial range of Herodotus' historiographical successors Thucydides and Xenophon.