

BETWEEN THUCYDIDES AND POLYBIUS

THE GOLDEN AGE OF GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY

EDITED BY
GIOVANNI PARMEGGIANI

CENTER FOR HELLENIC STUDIES
Trustees for Harvard University
Washington, D.C.
Distributed by Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England
2014

Between Thucydides and Polybius

Edited by Giovanni Parmeggiani

Copyright © 2014 Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University
All Rights Reserved.

Published by Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University,
Washington, D.C.

Distributed by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London,
England

Production: Nancy Wolfe Kotary

Cover design: Joni Godlove

Printed by Edwards Brothers Malloy, Ann Arbor, MI

EDITORIAL TEAM

Senior Advisers: W. Robert Connor, Gloria Ferrari Pinney, Albert Henrichs, James
O'Donnell, Bernd Seidensticker

Editorial Board: Gregory Nagy (Editor-in-Chief), Christopher Blackwell, Casey Dué
(Executive Editor), Mary Ebbott (Executive Editor), Scott Johnson, Olga Levaniouk,
Anne Mahoney, Leonard Muellner

Production Manager for Publications: Jill Curry Robbins

Web Producer: Mark Tomasko

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Between Thucydides and Polybius : the golden age of Greek historiography / edited by
Giovanni Parmeggiani.

pages cm -- (Hellenic studies ; 64)

ISBN 978-0-674-42834-8 (alk. paper)

1. Greece--History. I. Parmeggiani, Giovanni. II. Series: Hellenic studies ; 64.

DF211.B48 2014

938.007--dc23

2014013063

Contents

1. Introduction <i>Giovanni Parmeggiani</i>	1
2. Looking for the Invisible <i>Riccardo Vattuone</i>	7
3. Rethinking Isocrates and Historiography <i>John Marincola</i>	39
4. At the Boundary of Historiography <i>Roberto Nicolai</i>	63
5. The Use of Documents in Xenophon's <i>Hellenica</i> <i>Cinzia Bearzot</i>	89
6. The Causes of the Peloponnesian War <i>Giovanni Parmeggiani</i>	115
7. Ephorus in Context <i>Nino Luraghi</i>	133
8. Ephorus, Polybius, and τὰ καθόλου γράφειν <i>John Tully</i>	153
9. Greek Monographs on the Persian World <i>Dominique Lenfant</i>	197
10. The Sick Man of Asia? <i>Christopher Tuplin</i>	211
11. Local History, <i>Polis</i> History, and the Politics of Place <i>Rosalind Thomas</i>	239

Contents

12. The Tools of Memory <i>Sarah Ferrario</i>	263
13. Aristotle and History <i>Lucio Bertelli</i>	289
Index Locorum	305
Subject Index	313

Greek Monographs on the Persian World The Fourth Century BCE and its innovations

DOMINIQUE LENFANT

WHILE IT IS the best-known Greek monograph on the Persian world, Ctesias' *Persica* is often cited today as an illustration of the supposed decadence of the historical genre in the fourth century BCE. One symptom of this 'decay' is Ctesias' choice of subject matter: rather than a politico-military history focused on the contemporary Greek world, Ctesias' history concerns conflicts that took place within the Persian Empire—court intrigues, for example, and local revolts. The apparent decline has also been observed in Ctesias' historical method and is linked to his alleged motivation for writing history: the vain desire to supplant Herodotus, rather than the search for truth that is thought to lie behind the projects of Herodotus and Thucydides.¹ Ctesias has, moreover, been accused of ethnic prejudices, particularly in his malicious portrayal of the Persian court.² Similar charges have also been brought against Dinon, a later writer of a *Persica*, who tends to be seen in relation to Ctesias as Ctesias is to Herodotus, namely as a plagiarist who tweaks the text in order to conceal his plagiarism.³

Such views are for the most part overly simplistic, since they take into account neither the fragmentary nature of the evidence nor the biases of our sources. They compare Ctesias, moreover, only to the few historians whose works have survived intact, such as Herodotus, without paying any attention to other accounts of the same genre, about which we do indeed know something. As a result, they are unable to account for the distinctive features of the *Persica* as a whole. It is my purpose, therefore, to suggest another way of looking at these Greek monographs on the Persian world, a genre that may have assumed

¹ E.g. Jacoby 1922, Bleckmann 2007.

² E.g. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987.

³ E.g. Drews 1973:117, Binder 2008:65.

a new scale in the fourth century BCE, but whose roots go back to the fifth.⁴ I intend to point out some similarities and differences among the fourth-century *Persica*, before considering their relationship to earlier histories, both the fifth-century *Persica* and the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides.

1. Fourth-Century *Persica*: disparity and unity

Before defining the common features of the *Persica*, however, it is necessary to assess the state of our knowledge, which depends entirely on fragments.

What can we know about the *Persica*?

We know of three historians who wrote *Persica* in the fourth century: Ctesias of Cnidus, Dinon of Colophon, and Heracleides of Cyme.⁵ The extent to which we are able to gain any insight into their individual works, however, differs considerably for each author. This disparity is a result, first of all, of the number of fragments available for each historian. We know a good deal more about Ctesias, whose *Persica* survives in 90 fragments, than we do about Dinon (35 fragments) or Heracleides (8 fragments), all the more so because Photius, Plutarch, and Nicolaus of Damascus preserve excerpts from Ctesias of exceptional length. A second explanation of this disparity is the range of citing sources: nearly 50 for Ctesias, some 15 for Dinon, and only three for Heracleides. So, while for Ctesias' work we may hope to have overlapping pieces of evidence from different sources, the same cannot be said of Dinon and Heracleides, both of whom are cited predominately by only two authors, Plutarch and Athenaeus.⁶

Given these circumstances, it may be the case that our vision of Dinon and Heracleides is influenced by the filter of these two citing authors—by their particular methods of selection and adaptation of their sources—so that the characteristics observed in the fragments may in fact only be those of the citers. For example, the fragments of each *Persica* share a marked interest in the material goods of the Persian court: Dinon writes about the Great King's golden footstool (FGH 690 F 26), his perfumed headdress (FGH 690 F 25), and his precious drinking cup (FGH 690 F 4); while Heracleides writes about the

⁴ For a succinct presentation of *Persica*: Lenfant 2007a. For further developments: Lenfant 2009a. Edition, French translation, and commentary of Ctesias' *Persica*: Lenfant 2004; of Dinon's and Heracleides' fragments: Lenfant 2009a. Two English translations of Ctesias' *Persica* have been recently published: Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010; Stronk 2010 (Stronk is also preparing a detailed commentary). Summary and bibliography on Ctesias as a source on the Persian Empire: Lenfant 2011.

⁵ On other authors who are said in the extant tradition to have written *Persica*, see Lenfant 2009b.

⁶ Dinon: 10 fragments by Athenaeus, 7 by Plutarch; Heracleides: 4 fragments by Athenaeus, 2 by Plutarch.

golden royal throne, which was surrounded by small golden columns inlaid with precious stones (FGH 689 F 1). Such an attention to *realia* may in fact only reflect the interests of Athenaeus, to whom we owe all of these fragments, and this hypothesis becomes even more likely when we take a look at Athenaeus' treatment of Herodotus. For, if Herodotus were known to us only through the citations to his work in the *Deipnosophists*, we would assume not only that he was mainly interested in animals, food, natural products, table practices, and table ware of the barbarian world, but also that he was virtually silent about political history.⁷ To understand the *Persica* of Dinon and Heracleides, then, we must rely on Athenaeus and Plutarch without any assurance that the themes to which they are drawn are in any way representative of the works as a whole.

There is much, therefore, that we cannot know with regard to Dinon and Heracleides in particular, and our ignorance extends beyond the topics treated by each work to the structure of the works themselves. While we have a good idea about how Ctesias arranged his *Persica*, thanks to Diodorus and Photius, who partially reproduced it, for Dinon we can attempt only an uncertain reconstruction⁸ and things remain most obscure for Heracleides.⁹ Another unknown is the proportion of narrative to description. For Ctesias, the abundance of narrative material in the fragments suggests that this was his chief interest. For Dinon and Heracleides, on the other hand, our impression depends on the citing source: Athenaeus tends to preserve descriptive elements, Plutarch prefers narrative, and as a result it is not easy to identify the predominating tendency in each original work.¹⁰

Some Clear Disparities

What we do not know about the *Persica*, however, does not prevent us from noting some undeniable disparities among them. The first distinction has to do with the date of composition of each work: Ctesias' *Persica*, which was finished about

⁷ Lenfant 2007b:63–67.

⁸ Dinon's work had a chronological scope ranging from the Assyria of Semiramis to the Persian Empire of the 340s, and a chronological structure can neither be excluded nor proved by the (inconclusive) indications of book division in the citing sources. Once again, citations of Herodotus in the *Deipnosophists* are a good warning against reconstructing a work by relying on Athenaeus alone, despite the precision with which he cites his sources (Lenfant 2007b:67–68).

⁹ On Heracleides' *Paraskeuastika*, either a work distinct from, or a part of, his *Persica*, but evidently treating the Persian Empire in the same way, cf. Lenfant 2009a:257–261.

¹⁰ This is why I have thought it better to speak of 'monographs' on the Persian world, rather than ethnographies or histories of Persia, terms that seem to suggest a descriptive or narrative tendency. An account of wars of conquest, local revolts, and crises of succession is well attested for Ctesias, thanks in particular to Photius. Although we are unable to rely on Photius for the work of Dinon or Heracleides, we can identify similar features in their work, especially for the period best covered by their fragments (the reign of Artaxerxes II).

390, is the oldest, and it was in fact completed and continued half a century later by Dinon and Heracleides.¹¹ It is impossible to say whether Heracleides' *Persica* was later or earlier than that of Dinon, nor can we rule out the possibility that each work was composed independently. That is to say, besides the fact that these three narratives were not conceived in the same historical context, they also do not fit into the same situation of intertextuality.

Another distinguishing feature is the length of each *Persica*: 23 books for Ctesias, probably more for Dinon,¹² but only five for Heracleides. Such a disproportion suggests another fundamental difference: whereas Dinon seems to have followed Ctesias' pattern, treating the same period and topics as Ctesias before moving on to the contemporary period, Heracleides endowed his *Persica* with more modest dimensions, and this may suggest that his project was unique.

In fact, Heracleides' work is generally thought to be distinctive in two regards: first, it contained more description than narration; and second, it was serious work and thus quite unlike Ctesias' fanciful account. One might certainly have reservations about labelling an author as either serious or fanciful,¹³ about the influence of Athenaeus' method of selection, or about the qualities that modern scholars sometimes generously assign to works that are almost completely unknown.¹⁴ But there are several arguments in favor of seeing Heracleides' work, if not as completely divergent from the other *Persica*, still as markedly different. It is striking, first of all, to note the quality of Heracleides' fragments, those that have been transmitted by Athenaeus at any rate, a quality that is due not only to Athenaeus' faithful reproduction of the original text in the *Deipnosophists*, but also to the significant information preserved by Heracleides himself.¹⁵ In several fragments, for example, court customs are described with a great deal of precision, in particular the long passage about the King's dinner (FGH 689 F 2), which has no equivalent in Herodotus or in the other *Persica*. The phrases with which Athenaeus introduces this fragment, in fact, suggest that it comprises two verbatim quotations,¹⁶ so that, even if it were not representative of the whole, *pars pro toto*, it is at least a piece from the whole, *pars ex toto*.

¹¹ Dinon continued the history of the Persian Empire at least until the 340s (Lenfant 2009a:51–53), whereas the *terminus post quem* for Heracleides cannot be defined very precisely: the 380–360s BCE (ibid. 257).

¹² Although the scarce sources suggest at least 15 books, it seems more likely that there were about 30. Cf. Lenfant 2009a:64–66.

¹³ One may wonder how relevant it could be to consider, e.g., Herodotus as either a serious or fanciful historian.

¹⁴ Thus, Olmstead 1948:380 considers that Ctesias' treatise *On the Tributes in Asia* was "a contribution to economic history whose loss is irreparable."

¹⁵ On comparing Heracleides' information with local sources, see Lenfant 2009a, part 3. For a comparison with earlier Mesopotamian sources, see Lion 2013.

¹⁶ At least this is to be deduced from Athenaeus' citations of Herodotus. Cf. Lenfant 2007b:51–52.

It should be once again emphasized that Heracleides' work was relatively brief: five books certainly do not allow for a narrative as developed as that of Ctesias,¹⁷ and this supports the idea of a mostly descriptive account.¹⁸

Common features

Despite these clear disparities, the three fourth-century *Persica* share several common features. They all seem to present a kind of political ethnography: the "Persian" world has no ethnic connotation but refers rather to the Persian Empire. That is to say, the *Persica* treat people within the Empire who are not all Persian in a cultural or ethno-linguistic sense:¹⁹ the political entity (the Empire) counts more than the ethno-cultural reality (the Persian people). Secondly, and most important, the topic best represented by our fragments is neither ethnography proper nor the customs of ordinary men, but the behavior and activity of the King and his court. In short, the *Persica* show a marked interest in the sphere of central power, and this is the focus of both the narrative and descriptive portions of the *Persica*. Alongside wars of conquest and local revolts, then, the *Persica* narrate court intrigues, conflicts, and stories of revenge, as well as crises of succession—a set of themes that modern scholars sometimes call *petite histoire* and that derives at least in part from Herodotus. The descriptive approach, in contrast, seems to be new, in particular the precise detail with which the daily life of the King and his court is depicted.

The description of the court circle is original in three respects. First, it pays especial attention to the general court staff: concubines playing music, royal guards,²⁰ eunuchs,²¹ nobles taking part in the royal dinner, servants specifically charged with preparing meals²² or dressing beds, and so forth.²³ Secondly, it reveals a novel interest in material goods (the general surroundings of the

¹⁷ Or that of Dinon in probably even more books. See above n12.

¹⁸ This is not to say that Heracleides' *Persica* included only description. No fragment, it is true, alludes to the Assyrian or Median Empire, so his account may have been limited to the Persian Empire in the strict sense of the word. In addition, no fragment mentions the Persian Wars or what preceded them. The two narrative allusions, moreover, do not even prove that his *Persica* comprised a continuous story, since they might have been used only to illustrate some aspects of court life. On the other hand, we should not disregard the fragmentary nature of our information, nor the fact that even brief works are capable of containing concise narratives, as in the case of Charon of Lampsacus (on this, see Lenfant 2009a:14–16).

¹⁹ See Ctesias FGH 688 FF 11–12 on Dyrbaioi and Choramnaioi ; Dinon FGH 690 F 21, F 22, F 30 on Egypt, India, Ethiopia ; and Heracleides FGH 689 F 4 on "the country where frankincense is produced," whose king is in fact said to be independent.

²⁰ Heracleides FGH 689 FF 1–2.

²¹ Ctesias, Dinon, and Heracleides, *passim*.

²² Heracleides F 2.

²³ Heracleides F 5.

court, particular luxury objects, and items of food and their distribution), an interest, we should note, that is evident in many of the fragments of our three authors, not only in those transmitted by Athenaeus.

With respect to the physical setting, Ctesias describes the royal park (the so-called *paradeisos*) of Susa (688 F 34a-b), Heracleides the inner courts of the royal palace, which were covered with luxurious carpets on which no one but the King could walk, the aforesaid golden throne equipped with small, decorated columns on which the King sat when giving audience (689 F 1), and the room where the King had his meal, privately from his guests, whom he could see through a curtain without being seen himself (689 F 2). As for luxury items, Dinon mentions the golden egg from which the King drank (690 F 4) and the golden footstool on which he stepped when descending from his chariot (690 F 26). As for food, both Ctesias and Dinon provide details about the *rhyntakes*, a little bird that was consumed at the court;²⁴ Dinon mentions the ammoniac salt and Nile water that was sent from Egypt to the King (690 F 23a); and Heracleides discusses the bread and above all the meat that was cut at the King's dinner, of vast quantity (a thousand animals slaughtered daily) and great variety: horses, camels, oxen, asses, deer, sheep, birds, Arabian ostriches, geese, and cocks (689 F 2). In this way, the *Persica* provide a most vivid image of the court, its characters, scenery, and material components.

The third peculiarity of the *Persica* is their interest in explanation: not only are court practices described, but very often their meaning is expounded. For example, the kings of Persia store in their treasury water from the Nile and the Istros because, as Dinon points out,²⁵ they desire to "assert the greatness of their empire and their universal power."²⁶ But the most striking illustration of this explanatory tendency is provided by Heracleides in reference to the presentation of food at the King's dinner; the historian is not content merely to give a precise description of this meal but rather takes it upon himself to interpret its purpose and utility. The pieces of meat cut by the royal staff are distributed to the nobles who have been honored with an invitation to the royal table, who in turn redistribute at home what is left of their share. Food is also dispensed to the royal guards as payment, which Heracleides compares to the pay of mercenaries in the Greek world. He introduces his description of this process of distribution with the following judgment:

Τὸ δὲ δεῖπνον, φησί, τὸ βασιλέως καλούμενον ἀκούσαντι μὲν δόξει
μεγαλοπρεπὲς εἶναι, ἐξεταζόμενον δὲ φανεῖται οἰκονομικῶς καὶ

²⁴ Ctesias F 27.70, F 29b (19.4) and F 29c*, Dinon F 15b.

²⁵ Dinon F 23b (= Plutarch *Alexander* 36.4).

²⁶ See also e.g. Dinon F 26, Ctesias F 40, Heracleides F 1.

ἀκριβῶς συντεταγμένον καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Πέρσαις τοῖς ἐν δυναστεία οὔσι κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον.

The so-called King's dinner will appear sumptuous (μεγαλοπρεπές) to one who hears about it (ἀκούσαντι), but when one examines it carefully (ἐξεταζόμενον), it will be found to have been set up with economy and parsimony (οἰκονομικῶς καὶ ἀκριβῶς συντεταγμένον), and the same is true among other Persians who exercise power. (Translation by C. B. Gulick, modified)

Heracleides F 2 (Athenaeus 4.145d)

It is noteworthy not only that Heracleides praises the good management involved in the setting up of the King's dinner but also that he contrasts hearsay (ἀκούσαντι) with a precise examination (ἐξεταζόμενον), evidently both visual and intellectual. Two possible reactions are thus preempted here: first, a potential negative reaction to what could be interpreted as overindulgence at the King's table. When Heracleides uses the word *oikonomikos*, he expresses the idea of measure and rational control, in the same way that he will emphasize that each guest gets only a moderate portion (Καὶ μέτρια μὲν αὐτῶν παρατίθεται ἐκάστῳ τῶν συνδείπνων τοῦ βασιλέως, "Of these [meats] only moderate portions are served to each of the King's guests, and each of them may carry home whatever he leaves untouched at the meal"). The historian explicitly intends, then, to contradict an impression of ostentatious waste and useless outlay in order to avoid any misinterpretation and to contest the popular conception of the Great King's *tryphe*, of a continuous meal, at which people abandon themselves to an easy and weakening life of pleasure. But in precluding this cliché of Persian luxury, Heracleides also rejects a second tendency: to record *thaumasia* and describe sensational practices in order merely to provoke astonishment. The prototype of this attitude may well be the famous passage where Herodotus (2.35-36) describes the customs of Egyptian people as being exactly opposite to those of the rest of mankind (women go to the market, whereas men stay at home; women urinate standing, men sitting, and so on). Along these same lines, another passage from Herodotus' *Histories* provides an interesting point of comparison with Heracleides' *Persica*: Herodotus says that on their birthdays rich Persian men "serve an ox, a horse, a camel, an ass, roasted whole in ovens, while the poor men serve the lesser kinds of cattle" (1.133). In this way, he leaves the reader to his amazement without adding any further details or exegesis. Heracleides might also have contented himself with such a tactic. But, rather than simply mention the extraordinary quantity and variety of meat that was daily carved at court, he preferred to add an explanation.

One point remains doubtful, however: was this concern for such cliché-reversing explanations a distinctive feature of Heracleides alone? The fragmentary nature of the texts makes this a question quite impossible to answer, as is attested by a brief passage from the *Deipnosophists* that refers both to Ctesias and to Dinon and is thus considered a fragment of both historians: “The Persian king, as Ctesias and Dinon say in their *Persica*, used to dine in the company of 15,000 men, and four hundred talents were spent on the dinner.”²⁷ This reference lacks any form of explanation, which makes the information contained here seem all the more sensational. And modern scholars would probably have read it in just this way had they not been aware of Heracleides’ interpretation. The question, then, is whether the lack of an explanation here is due only to Athenaeus’ editorial practice. For several reasons, this seems probable. First, the process of excerption often entails the suppression of context and explanatory details.²⁸ Secondly, Athenaeus gives here only a brief paraphrase,²⁹ not a long literal reproduction, as he does in the case of Heracleides’ fragment on the King’s dinner (F 2). Athenaeus is in fact comparing the costs of Alexander’s meals with those of the King, so that any explanatory comments would be beside the point and might even interrupt the thread of his argument. Besides, just a few lines before, Athenaeus had cited the long passage from Heracleides,³⁰ and so he needs retain here only those numerical details that went unmentioned by Heracleides. It cannot be ruled out, then, that Dinon and Ctesias also explained the grounds and circumstances of these expenses. Ctesias’ account certainly does not lack sensational aspects, but we must keep in mind that we have no literal citation of his work that could be compared in length and textual quality to Heracleides F 2. Nor have any personal comments been preserved, so that some of his explanatory material might well have fallen out.

In any case, the fourth-century *Persica* lead the reader far from mere caricatures of the Great King abstractly depicted as a despot devoted to sensual pleasures and ruling over a populace of slaves: they give a far more vivid, rich, and balanced picture. At the same time, with regard to material items, they are not content merely to list exotic marvels; even food, exported from the ends of the Empire or distributed at court, is seen as a political tool. By stressing the common features of the three fourth-century *Persica*, then, one arrives at an understanding far different from what would have resulted from a comparison between Ctesias and Herodotus alone.

²⁷ Ctesias F 39 = Dinon F 24 (Athenaeus 4.146c).

²⁸ The process of excerption can be an art of fabricating the wondrous, as is shown by Jacob and Schepens (Jacob 1983 and Schepens 1996:390–394).

²⁹ As the characteristic formula ὡς φησι shows. See Lenfant 2007b:48–51.

³⁰ 4.145a–146a.

2. The Relationship of Fourth-Century Persica to Fifth-Century Histories

Now that we have some idea of their common features, we are in a position to ask what distinguishes fourth-century *Persica* from histories written in the fifth century.

Thucydides

It is often said that fourth-century historiography on the whole follows in the footsteps of Thucydides. This is not the case with the *Persica*: they may follow Thucydides chronologically, but there is no genealogical relation nor any indication that the *Persica*-writers had any precise knowledge of Thucydides. In the case of Ctesias, in fact, a lack of engagement with Thucydides is explained by the fact that both historians published their histories at about the same time. But we should emphasize that the material common to Thucydides and the writers of *Persica* was rather limited: as has often been noticed, Thucydides says very little about the Persians,³¹ and the mere difference of their subjects is enough to account for the scarcity of overlaps.³² Last, there are few similarities with regard to method. In brief, the Thucydidean model plays no part in the fourth-century *Persica*, so that these writings are later than Thucydides' history only by virtue of the sequence of time: contrary to what has been said about the *Hellenica*, they are neither its heir, nor its opposite, nor a pale imitation.

Fifth-Century *Persica*

It is far more productive to question the links between *Persica* of the fourth century BCE and those of the fifth, of Dionysius of Miletus, Charon of Lampsacus, and Hellanicus of Lesbos.³³ Despite our limited knowledge of these works, we can say that all *Persica* shared the tendency to narrate the internal story of the Persian Empire and its kings, but there are several important distinctions.

The first is obvious: fifth-century *Persica* did not go beyond the fifth century, indeed not even beyond the first half of that century, and, as a consequence, the Persian Wars and the two kings who ruled the Empire at that time occupy a relatively large place in their narratives. In the fourth century, on the other hand,

³¹ Andrewes 1961; Meiggs 1972:3; Wiesehöfer 2006.

³² Among the few common subjects attested by the fragments are the revolt of Inaros (Thucydides, Ctesias) and the meeting between the exiled Themistocles and the Great King (Thucydides, Dinon F 13, Heracleides F 6 [= Plutarch *Themistocles* 27.1–2]). Whereas Ctesias probably had not read Thucydides, this is less certain for Dinon and Heracleides.

³³ Lenfant 2009a:9–24.

the Persian Wars no longer seemed so central: they constituted at the very most only a part of the long history of the relations between Greeks and Persians and a marginal one in the history of the Persian Empire itself. This is true even for Ctesias, whose account of these wars, although contradicting Herodotus in many details, was nevertheless quite brief.³⁴ As a result, the fragments of the fourth-century *Persica* give the impression that the history of the Empire was seen more on its own terms. A second disparity is that the fifth-century *Persica* tended to be rather short: two books for Charon, at least two (maybe no more) for Hellanicus, compared with the 23 books of Ctesias and probably more by Dinon (Heracleides being, as we have seen, unique in this respect). Such an amplification is linked, first of all, to the time at which these works were written: several decades had passed, in some cases even a century, and this resulted in the accretion of much new material. But there are literary grounds, as well—the intervening publication of Herodotus’ account, for example, which is a third feature that separates fourth- from fifth-century *Persica*: while the latter are contemporary with Herodotus for the period that they cover and are, for this reason, probably independent from him, the fourth-century authors were well aware of Herodotus’ account, and this is not without consequence.

Herodotus

Although Herodotus was not himself strictly a *Persica*-writer, he gave pride of place to the history and description of the Persian Empire—so much so, in fact, that in his day, his was likely the most detailed account available, far overshadowing earlier and contemporary *Persica*. Ctesias certainly seems to know Hellanicus, whose claims he sometimes contests,³⁵ but it is mainly against Herodotus that he takes a stand, explicitly or not.

Polemics against Herodotus is a well-known feature of Ctesias’ *Persica*, and its importance should certainly not be understated, whatever its motivation.³⁶ Yet we should keep several points in mind. First, Ctesias’ *Persica* sets itself apart from Herodotus’ account not only with regard to the details but also in the very nature of his project. Ctesias self-consciously places his work in the tradition of the earlier *Persica*: its guiding principle is the story of the Persian Empire, not the relations between Greeks and Persians, and the period he covers, therefore,

³⁴ Books 12 and 13 of Ctesias included no less than the reigns of Cambyses, the Magus, Darius, and Xerxes (T 8 and F 13.9).

³⁵ Ctesias F 16.62.

³⁶ On this well-known topic, see Jacoby 1922:2050-2059; Lenfant 1996; 2004:xxviiiif.; Bichler 2004; Bleckmann 2007; Lenfant 2009a:27-30.

extends both before Herodotus' period of focus and after, continuing on into the early fourth century. This makes the Persian Wars even more marginal than they had been in the earlier *Persica* and endowed them with rather a different significance.³⁷

Secondly, whereas divergences between Ctesias and Herodotus have often been noted, especially by Photius, convergences have generally been neglected, and there were probably many. Let us turn, for instance, to the description of the Choaspes river. Herodotus (1.188) says that the Choaspes is "the only river from which the King will drink," that "its water is boiled, and very many four-wheeled wagons drawn by mules carry it in silver vessels, following the King wherever he goes at any time." Athenaeus, after paraphrasing Herodotus' passage, adds further information that he has drawn from Ctesias: "Ctesias of Cnidus also explains how this royal water is boiled and how it is put into the vessels and transported for the King, adding that it is very light and pleasant."³⁸ Far from contradicting Herodotus, then, Ctesias here confirms and supplements his account. While the shadow of Herodotus undeniably influences Ctesias' *Persica*, or rather a limited part thereof, it can hardly be detected in the fragments of successive *Persica*. Indeed, some scholars have erred in identifying in Dinon an interest in contradicting Herodotus³⁹ rather than a rivalry with Ctesias,⁴⁰ which seems more likely.

That being said, we should note that Herodotus' shadow generally had more of an impact on *Persica* than did Thucydides' on the *Hellenica*, for the simple reason that, unlike the *Hellenica*, which undertook to continue Thucydides' project, Ctesias and Dinon obviously aimed at replacing Herodotus' account with a modified, expanded, and updated version. This expansion is evident in two respects. First, because Persia was so different from the Greek world, *Persica* provide a description, indeed an explanation, of the Empire's components and customs, with a predilection for practices and people of the royal court, all of which is lacking in *Hellenica*. Secondly, circumstances had changed since the period with which Herodotus ends his history: the Persian Wars were now long in the past, and Persian rule had again imposed itself on Greek cities of Asia Minor. How could a Greek's view of Persia remain unchanged?

³⁷ Note that the Persian Wars only covered some 4% of Ctesias' *Persica*, compared to 40% for Herodotus' *Histories* (see Lenfant 2009a:315–316).

³⁸ Athenaeus 2.45a–b = Ctesias FGH 688 F 37.

³⁹ See Lenfant 2009a:238–242 on Dinon F 28.

⁴⁰ That clearly emerges from the divergences between Dinon and Ctesias about the events surrounding Cyrus the Younger's rebellion (Dinon F 15–17).

3. Conclusions

The extended historical monograph devoted to a foreign people, namely the Persians, appears to be one of the new trends of Greek historiography in the fourth century BCE. By focusing on the Persian world, these works distinguish themselves not only from political historiography of the fifth century but also from the contemporary *Hellenica*, another sort of specialized history but one that was focused on the Greek world. At the same time, the *Persica* differ from the nascent universal histories, which encompass a larger geographical area, although both genres, *Persica* and universal history, have in common the fact that they go back to a far remote past and make a claim to supplant previous accounts. Thus, far from being merely a failed attempt to surpass fifth-century historiography, *Persica* of the fourth century paved a new way in a varied historiographical field.

This is not to say that these *Persica* should be seen outside of time and space as mere reactions to literary tradition, uninfluenced by their own time. It is important to keep in mind the geo-political, biographical, and chronological conditions in which the genre developed in the fourth century: these works were composed by Greeks from Asia who lived in contact with Persians at a time when the Persian Wars no longer accounted for the concrete reality of relations between Greeks and Persians, still less for the history of the Empire itself. These works, as we have seen, focus mainly on the sphere of central power in recounting its history and describing and explaining its administration.

The fact that *Persica* ceased to be composed after the Persian Empire was incorporated into Alexander's Empire can be explained by the fact that Greeks were henceforth faced with a world that was larger and far more complex, where it was more difficult to distinguish the fate of Persians from the rest of humanity.⁴¹ But we should also think about what might have motivated the Greeks to write *Persica* in the first place: a very specific political relationship, a Persian domination that, depending on the *polis* and on the moment in time, could be past, potential, or present, a foreign civilization often viewed as a cultural counterpoint. In fact, as a political ethnography, *Persica* were by necessity a history of the present.

⁴¹ What Tuplin has said about the death of *Hellenica* (Tuplin 2007:168–169) applies all the more to *Persica*.

Bibliography

- Andrewes, A. 1961. "Thucydides and the Persians." *Historia* 10:1–18.
- Bichler, R. 2004. "Ktesias "korrigiert" Herodot. Zur literarischen Einschätzung der Persika." In *Ad fontes! : Festschrift für Gerhard Dobesch zum fünfundsiebzigsten Geburtstag am 15. September 2004*, ed. H. Heftner, and K. Tomaschitz, 105–116. Vienna.
- Binder, C. 2008. *Plutarchs Vita des Artaxerxes. Ein historischer Kommentar*. Berlin.
- Bleckmann, B. 2007. "Ktesias von Knidos und die Perserkriege: Historische Varianten zu Herodot." In *Herodot und die Epoche der Perserkriege. Realitäten und Fiktionen. Kolloquium zum 80. Geburtstag von Dietmar Kienast*, ed. B. Bleckmann, 137–150. Cologne.
- Drews, R. 1973. *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History*. Cambridge, MA.
- Jacob, C. 1983. "De l'art de compiler à la fabrication du merveilleux. Sur la paradoxographie grecque." *Lalies* 2:121–140.
- Jacoby, F. 1922. "Ktesias (1)." *RE* XI 2:2032–2073.
- Lenfant, D. 1996. "Ctésias et Hérodote, ou les réécritures de l'histoire dans la Perse achéménide." *Revue des Études Grecques* 109:348–380.
- . 2004. *Ctésias. La Perse. L'Inde. Autres fragments*. Paris.
- . 2007a. "Greek Historians of Persia." In *Marincola 2007*:200–209.
- . 2007b. "Les "fragments" d'Hérodote dans les Deipnosophistes." In *Athénée et les fragments d'historiens*, ed. D. Lenfant, 43–72. Paris.
- . 2009a. *Les Histoires perses de Dinon et d'Héraclide. Fragments édités, traduits et commentés*. Paris.
- . 2009b. "Des Persica indépendants de l'empire perse? Enquête sur les usages d'un titre." In *Ingenia Asiatica. Fortuna e tradizione di storici d'Asia Minore*, ed. F. Gazzano et al., 15–33. Rome.
- . 2011. "Ctésias de Cnide." In *Les Perses vus par les Grecs*, ed. D. Lenfant, 96–107. Paris.
- Lion, B. 2013. "Les banquets perses d'après le livre IV d'Athénée : points de vue grecs, points de vue orientaux." In *À la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*, ed. C. Grandjean et al. Rennes and Tours, 107–125.
- Llewellyn-Jones, L., and J. Robson, eds. 2010. *Ctesias' History of Persia. Tales of the Orient*. London.
- Marincola, J., ed. 2007. *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* I. Oxford.
- Meiggs, R. 1972. *The Athenian Empire*. Oxford.
- Olmstead, A. T. 1948. *History of the Persian Empire*. Chicago.
- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. 1987. "Decadence in the Empire or Decadence in the Sources? From Source to Synthesis." In *Achaemenid History* I, ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt, 33–45. Leiden.

- Schepens, G. 1996. "Ancient Paradoxography: Origin, Evolution, Production and Reception, Part I." In *La Letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino*, ed. O. Pecere and A. Stramaglia, 375–409. Cassino.
- Stronk, J. P. 2010. *Ctesias' Persian history, Part 1: Introduction, Text, and Translation*. Düsseldorf.
- Tuplin, C. 2007. "Continuous Histories (*Hellenica*).” In *Marincola 2007*:159–170.
- Wiesehöfer, J. 2006. “. . . Keeping the Two Sides Equal’: Thucydides, the Persians and the Peloponnesian War.” In *Brill's Companion to Thucydides*, ed. A. Rengakos and A. Tsakmakis, 657–667. Leiden.