ATHENIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY AND HERODOTUS’ *HISTORIES*

SARA FORSDYKE

It is an oft-repeated refrain in studies of Athenian politics that we have no ancient treatises that systematically describe Athenian beliefs about the value of democracy. Although we can reconstruct some democratic values from the institutions and practices of the Athenian state, scholars have had to rely on elite writers such as Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, or on the more allusive references in Athenian drama in order to get at the positive tenets of democratic political theory. Recently, oratory has been shown to be a valuable source for democratic political values. Great progress has been made in elucidating Athenian political thought and ideology from all these sources.

In this article, I wish to point to a rather neglected source for Athenian democratic ideology, namely Herodotus’ *Histories*. While parts of the *Histories* (especially the constitutional debate) have been studied for Greek political thought, less has been made of the *Histories* as a source for Athenian democratic political beliefs. I argue that democratic

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3 Standard textbooks on Greek political thought include the constitutional debate and very few other passages from Herodotus, e.g., Gagarin and Woodruff 1995, 77–85; Winton 2000, 101–11. These passages are taken as representative of Greek, not specifically Athenian political thought. Kagan (1965, 66) discusses the constitutional debate in regard to Athenian democratic political thought, but takes other passages from Herodotus as representative of Greek, not Athenian, political thought. Scholars interested in exploring the political values articulated in Herodotus’ *Histories* similarly emphasize Greek political values as opposed to specifically Athenian democratic values. Cf. Raaflaub 1987, Thompson
political values form the background against which several of Herodotus’ narratives resonate and that thus these narratives may provide fruitful ground from which to extract some central themes, symbols, and ideas of Athenian democratic ideology.

Herodotus’ narratives dealing with Athens are the obvious place to look for signs of Athenian political values, since they ultimately derive from Athenian sources. Yet full utilization of these narratives as a source for democratic beliefs has been hampered by the view, argued by Jacoby and accepted by many current historians, that Herodotus relied primarily on the aristocratic family traditions of the Alcmeonidae for his Athenian narratives and hence that his narratives do not reflect the beliefs of the Athenians as a whole but only those of a particular aristocratic family.4

1996, and Lateiner 1989, 163–86. Saxonhouse (1996) is an exception in that she sees Herodotus as theorizing about democratic equality. My approach is quite different from Saxonhouse in that I start from the principles of oral traditions as a way of getting to the role of democratic thought and ideology in the Histories. Although Raaffaub (1990, 41–49) argues that Herodotus’ constitutional debate is largely “a literary device for discussing democracy” (46), he does not argue that the prodemocracy arguments are derived from a specifically Athenian democratic perspective. Euben (1986a) perhaps comes closest to viewing Herodotus’ Histories as a locus of Athenian democratic political ideology in its representation of the battle of Salamis. To the extent that some scholars have been interested in Herodotus and Athens, the focus has primarily been on Herodotus’ own view of Periclean Athens, e.g., Strasburger 1955, Fornara 1971, Stadter 1992, Moles 1996.

4 Jacoby 1913, 237–38, 413; 1949, 152–58. Jacoby writes (163) that “Herodotus fully accepted the Alcmeonid version [of the tyranny of the Peisistratids]” but preserved “some material which can be used for reconstructing the general opinion of the Athenians.” He argues that the popular version of the tyranny, which he believes was recorded in Hellanicus’ lost Atthis, is more clear from Thucydides’ reactions to it than from Herodotus’ Histories. Although Murray (1987) argues that “the importance of the aristocratic tradition for the narrative of Herodotus has been much exaggerated,” he makes an exception for Herodotus’ account of Athenian history: “[W]ith the somewhat surprising exception of Athenian history there are very few of the typical signs of an aristocratic or family tradition in Herodotus” (102). For a recent example of this view of Herodotus’ sources for Athenian history cf. Lavelle (1993), who argues that the Alcmeonidae must have been “the primary beneficiaries” of Herodotus’ account of the rise of the Peisistratids, since their collaboration with the tyranny is overshadowed by the “theme of inevitability” that pervades Herodotus’ account (94). Nevertheless, Lavelle notes that the family tradition of the Alcmeonidae reveals the “demos-tradition” by exploiting and countering it at various points (87–88). In particular, Lavelle argues, the Alcmeonid tradition cleverly broadened its account to include all Athenians in its apology for collusion with the tyrants (95). Like Thomas (see below), however, Lavelle argues that Herodotus’ account of the overthrow of the tyranny must be drawn from non-Alcmeonid sources since it is unflattering to the
This view has been challenged, most recently by Rosalind Thomas in her pathbreaking study of the nature of oral traditions in archaic and classical Greece. Thomas argues that Herodotus’ *Histories*, and in particular his account of the liberation of Athens from the Peisistratid tyranny, reflects a wide variety of traditions, including popular or polis traditions as well as family ones. Certain elements of Herodotus’ account, she argues, are decidedly unflattering to the family of the Alcmeonidae and can only be explained by Herodotus’ utilization of non-Alcmeonid and, in particular, wider polis traditions.5

Thomas’s revisions of the dominant view of Herodotus’ versions of Athenian history open the way for a new evaluation of Herodotus’ narratives as a source for polis traditions, or widespread Athenian beliefs about their history and the origins and nature of their political system.6 Furthermore, since these polis traditions were orally transmitted, and oral traditions are shaped by the values of the group that transmits them, they should reveal the values of the fifth-century Athenians from whom Herodotus heard them.7 Herodotus’ narratives about early Athenian history, therefore, can be used as a source for widespread, fifth-century Athenian political beliefs and values, as well as partisan family traditions.8

In the first part of this article, I argue that comparison of Herodotus’ use of the verb κατέχειν in his Athenian narratives with the occurrence of this word in Athenian dramatic and historical texts reveals that this was a key term in the Athenians’ understanding of the value of democracy. Specifically, I argue that the word κατέχειν was used by the Athenians to describe the forceful subjection of a people by a tyrant and was associated with Athenian ideas about the weakness of societies ruled by


6 See Thomas (1989, 197–206) for a discussion of polis traditions. Thomas stresses the complexity of the means by which polis traditions are formed and argues that they are shaped both by the political institutions of the polis (assembly, council, lawcourts) and through gossip, rumor and the stories that Athenians told among themselves.


8 Kurke (1999, 333) offers a reading of Herodotus that shares this approach to Herodotus’ sources. Kurke writes: “In a sense Herodotus is a particularly valuable, even unique source, because of his roots in oral culture. . . . Herodotus appears to preserve competing, sometimes even contradictory *logoi* from oral informants across a whole spectrum of socioeconomic and ideological positions.”
a tyrant in contrast to the strength of free societies with a democratic political system. In the second half of this article, I argue that the theme of tyranny/civic weakness versus democracy/civic strength underlies Herodotus’ presentation of some non-Athenian narratives. In particular, I argue that structural and thematic parallels between the conversation between Xerxes and Demaratus in the Histories and the conversation between Atossa and her messenger in Aeschylus’ Persians reveal that the contrast between tyranny and freedom in the Demaratus episode is derived from Athenian democratic ideology.

ATHENIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY IN HERODOTUS’ ATHENIAN NARRATIVES

Herodotus’ first installment of Athenian history in the Histories occurs in the midst of his account of Lydian history in book 1. The Lydian king, Croesus, is seeking a Greek ally for his invasion of Persia and makes inquiries at Athens and Sparta. Herodotus uses Croesus’ inquiry as an excuse for a digression on Athenian history and particularly on how the tyrant Peisistratus came to power in Athens. What is significant for our purposes is how Herodotus describes the state of Athens under Peisistratus at the beginning of the digression: “Croesus learned that the Attic race was held down [κατεχόμενον] and torn apart [διεσπασμένον] by Peisistratus, son of Hippocrates, who was tyrant over the Athenians at this time” (1.59.1).

Comparison of the use of the verb κατεχεῖν in this introductory statement with other passages in Herodotus and Athenian literature shows that this statement is highly charged ideologically. In addition to

9 The participle διεσπασμένον is usually interpreted to mean “split by faction” (de Selincourt) or “torn by feuds” (Powell, Lexicon to Herodotus). But this is to confuse the time period to which this sentence refers, that is, when Peisistratus was tyrant (Πεισιστράτου . . . τοῦ τῶν χρόνων τυραννεύοντος Ἀθηναίων, 1.59.1) with an earlier period of stasis before he became tyrant, which Herodotus subsequently describes in a flashback (1.59.3–1.64.3). Furthermore, Peisistratus is the agent of both participles in the sentence, as is noted by Lavelle (1991, 318), a fact hard to reconcile with the translation of διεσπασμένον as “torn by faction.” Herodotus suggests that the Athenians were forcefully torn apart by Peisistratus (perhaps forcibly dispersed?), with implication that this contributed to their inability to use their collective strength to oppose him. This verb, therefore, also alludes to the Athenians’ weakness under tyrannical rule (cf. Gray 1997, 3). Herodotus used other more precise expressions to describe a situation of faction, especially the verb στασιάζειν, cf. 1.59.3, 5.66, 4.160.1, 160.2, 5.28.
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its basic connotations of compulsion\textsuperscript{10} and force,\textsuperscript{11} \textit{kataxein} is used repeatedly by Herodotus to characterize Peisistratus’ tyranny and seems to be part of the ideologically charged set of terms and concepts that were used to evoke the contrast between tyranny and democracy. In particular, the word is associated with the idea of the weakness of peoples ruled by tyrants in contrast to the strength of free democratic societies.\textsuperscript{12} This association can be observed most directly in Herodotus’ famous statement concerning the Athenian democracy, but is paralleled elsewhere in the \textit{Histories} as well as in Athenian literature.

It is clear that democracy [\textit{isigoryn}] is an excellent thing not just in one aspect but in every way. For the Athenians, when ruled by tyrants [\textit{turanneuvomevoi}], were not better than any of their neighbors in war, but when they had gotten rid of the tyrants [\textit{apallaxethentes de turannv}], they became first by far. This shows, therefore, that when they were held down [\textit{katechomevoi}], they were cowardly, on the grounds that they were working for a master [\textit{w despoto epagazomevoi}], but when they had been liberated [\textit{eleutherothentov}] each man was eager to work for himself [\textit{ekastos eisutro proethumeto katergazesthai}].\textsuperscript{13} (5.78)

\textsuperscript{10} The verb is used of Persian king Darius’ detention of the Milesian tyrant Histiaeus at Sardis against his will, 5.30.2, 5.106.1. Herodotus also uses the verb to describe the Spartan Leonidas’ detention of the Thebans at the battle of Thermopylae thus forcing them to remain and fight against their will. Herodotus says that Leonidas detained them “in the manner of hostages” and emphasizes the fact of compulsion through the use of both an adjective and a participle to indicate their unwillingness \textit{thiaioi} m\textit{en akontes emenon kai ou booulomevoi} (\textit{katech eishar sefaeis leovindhs en omievo lwnh poioumenos}) (7.222). Cf. Thuc. 1.91.3–4, where the Athenians detain some Spartan envoys while they rebuild their city walls.

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. 5.15.3, 5.45.1, 5.72.3 (of Spartan king Cleomenes’ occupation of the Athenian acropolis in 508), 8.61.1 (of the occupation of Athens by the Persians in 480).

\textsuperscript{12} Gray (1997, 3) observes the importance of this word for the theme of civic weakness under a tyranny in Herodotus, but does not suggest, as I do, that this word and theme were central to Athenian democratic ideology. Gray also does not draw the parallels in the use of this word with Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians} or with Thucydides’ description of Pericles’ rule (see below).

\textsuperscript{13} Herodotus uses the term \textit{isigoryn} (“equal right to speak”) to denote the Athenian democracy by synecdoche. In the context, it is clear that Herodotus is speaking of the Athenian democracy. Herodotus rarely uses the term \textit{dymokratia}, He uses it only once of the Athenian democracy (6.131.4), and once more of the establishment of democracy in the cities of Ionia after the Ionian revolt (6.43.3, cf. Herodotus’ use of the verb \textit{dymokratessai} at 6.43.3 and 4.137.2). Herodotus uses other terms to denote democracy such as \textit{idonomh} (3.80.6, 3.142.3) and/or circumlocutions such as: \textit{panta eis meson tis dymw thite} (4.161.3) and \textit{eis meson tis archn tithes} (3.142.3).
If we jump ahead to a later passage in which Herodotus describes a Spartan proposal to her allies to restore the tyranny at Athens, we can detect the same associations between the verb *katêxein* and civic weakness under tyrannical rule. Herodotus explains in the following way why the Spartans proposed to overthrow the democracy and restore the tyranny: “The Spartans . . . saw the Athenians growing greater [αὐξομένους] and in no way prepared to obey them [οὐδαμῶς ἐτοίμους ἔόντας πειθεσθαί σφίσι]. They recognized that the Attic race, if free [ἐλεύθερον μὲν ἔνον τὸ γένος τὸ Ἀττικὸν], would be equal in power to them [ἰσόρροπον τῷ ἐοιμεν], but if held down by a tyrant [κατεχόμενον . . . ὑπὸ τυραννίδος] it would be powerless [ἀσθενές] and ready to obey authorities [πειθαρχεῖσθαι ἐτοίμον]” (5.91.1). It is important to emphasize that the Spartan proposal to restore the tyranny is made after the foundation of the democracy by Cleisthenes. Therefore, when the Spartans refer to Athens as “free,” they are referring to the political freedom obtained under the democracy, not just freedom from tyranny. This is confirmed by consideration of the speech of the Spartans to their allies, which not only further picks up on the relation between democracy and civic strength and its antithesis but makes direct reference to the democracy.

The Spartans admit that they made a mistake in trusting the oracles that had commanded them to expel the Peisistratids:

> Agitated by false oracles, we expelled from their own country men who were close guest-friends to us and who undertook to keep Athens subservient [ἀναδεκομένους ὑποχειρίας παρέξειν τὰς Ἀθήνας]. In doing this, we handed over the city to an ungrateful people [ὅμως ἀχαρίστῳ], who, when they had been liberated by us [ὅτι ἡμέας ἐλευθερωθεῖς], tossed up their heads [ἀνέκουσε], and arrogantly drove us and our king out of their country [ἡμέας . . . καὶ τὸν βασιλέα ἡμέων περιυβρύσας εξέβολε]. And now that they [the Athenians] have established a reputation [δόξαν . . . φύσας], they are growing in strength [αὐξάνεται], as their neighbors, the Boeotians and Chalcideans have learned, and anyone else who wrongs them will quickly learn.

(5.91.2)

This passage expresses very directly the relation between tyranny and civic weakness and the antithetical relation between democratic freedom and civic strength. It is clear that the contrast is between tyranny and democracy, not between tyranny and another type of political constitution, both because of the context in Herodotus (the history of Athens
after the founding of the democracy) and because of the reference in the final passage above to the “ungrateful people” (δήμῳ ἀχαρίστῳ). \(^{14}\)

In the two passages just quoted, the Spartans adopt a view that is better suited to Athenians, that is, a belief in the connection between civic strength and democratic political organization. The Spartans acknowledge that Athens’ democratic political system has made Athens stronger. Such a belief is more likely to have been an Athenian than a Spartan view. In other words, Herodotus here has the Spartans enunciate a view that was probably part of Athenian democratic ideology. The Spartans had other reasons for wanting to restore the tyranny to Athens and probably did not cite views that corresponded so neatly with the Athenians’ own views of the value of their political system. \(^{15}\)

This is an important point for the study of the relation between the political values expressed in Herodotus’ narrative and Athenian democratic ideology. With this example in mind, we should be alert to correspondences between views expressed by non-Athenian characters and the themes, vocabulary, and imagery of Athenian democratic ideology.

\(^{14}\) Cf. Hdt. 7.156 where the phrase δήμῳ ἀχαρίστῳ is used of the common people in contrast to the elite citizens. In drawing the contrast between rule by the Peisistratids and rule by the “ungrateful people,” Herodotus simplifies Athenian history, skipping over the brief period of aristocratic/oligarchic rule between the overthrow of the Peisistratids in 510 and the establishment of the democracy in 508–507. Such simplifications are common in oral traditions which often “telescope” events in order to provide a more ideologically useful version of the past. On the concept of telescoping the past see Thomas 1989, 126. On the ideological simplification of the past for use in the present cf. Vansina 1985, 190–91.

\(^{15}\) It is worth noting that the Spartans’ meeting with their allies was without consequence since their allies rejected the proposal to restore the tyranny to Athens. One might ask therefore why Herodotus chose to narrate this inconsequential event. When the ideological content of the subsequent speech (5.92) of the Corinthian delegate, Socles, is taken into consideration, Herodotus’ intentions to explore the nature of tyranny in this narrative are clear. (For a discussion of Socles’ speech and its relation to Athenian democratic ideology cf. Forsdyke 1999.) One might even wonder whether this episode is historical at all (although modern historians tend to understand it as historical, cf. e.g., Jeffery 1988, 364). If the event is historical, then one might ask what Sparta’s actual reasons for wanting to restore the tyrants to Athens were. Cleomenes’ attempt to restore the Peisistratids with whom he enjoyed guest-friend relations may have been motivated by his desire to have some influence over Athens as well as to secure help for potential future political crises of his own, as was the customary obligation of guest-friendship (see Herman 1986).
Herodotus may evoke Athenian democratic ideology even in passages that ostensibly express the views of Athens’ opponents or rivals.

I have suggested that the Spartans enunciate Athenian democratic ideology in drawing the connection between democracy and civic strength versus tyranny and civic weakness. The importance of this set of associations in Athenian democratic ideology may be confirmed by turning to passages in Athenian literature where the same connection between the verb κατέχειν, tyranny, and civic weakness is made. These passages show that these ideological associations were current in Athens and Athenian democratic ideology long before Herodotus composed his Histories and therefore are not simply Herodotus’ personal view about the merits of democratic rule.

We may begin with a passage from Aeschylus’ Persians. This play, performed at Athens in 472 B.C., shows many parallels with Herodotus’ Histories, as has often been noted. I shall confine myself here to the ideological associations of κατέχειν in one passage in the play. When Queen Atossa first appears on stage in the Persians, she complains that she has been disturbed by dreams ever since her son Xerxes invaded Greece (176–80). She says that she dreamt about two women, one wearing Persian clothes and the other Greek. They were sisters, but one dwelt in Greece, while the other dwelt in the “barbarian” land. Atossa continues,

Strife fell among these two women, and my son, seeing this, was holding them down [κατέίχε] and calming them [κατέφαγεν] and he yoked them to a chariot [ἀρίασμαν δ’ ἐπὶ θεόν ςεύνον] and put a strap under their necks. And the one carried herself proudly [ἐπουργοῦτο] in this outfit, and kept her mouth obedient [ἐκαρτοῦ] in the reins; but the other put up a struggle [ἐφαρδαίζε] and tore the harness from the chariot with her hands and, unbridled, violently dragged it along and broke the yoke [ζυγὸν] in two. (188–96)

While the dream obviously foretells the failure of Xerxes’ mission to subdue Greece, its language goes further than this to suggest the ideological contrast between tyranny and democracy. When Xerxes “held
down” (κατεἰχε) the barbarian woman, she obediently accepted the yoke; the Greek woman, by contrast, resisted submission in a spirited manner.

One might object that the contrast here is not between oriental slavery and Athenian democracy, but between oriental slavery and Greek freedom. Yet this view ignores the wider context of the passage. Although Atossa does not mention Athens by name in this passage, she subsequently turns her full attention to Athens, the city against which her son set out (230ff.). Furthermore, this play was put on in Athens, before an audience of Athenians. In this performative context, “Greeks” would be understood primarily as “Athenians,” even before explicit attention was drawn to Athens. Indeed, the contrast between Persian monarchy and Athenian democracy is one of the dominant themes of the play. Most significantly, however, the language and imagery that Atossa uses is very similar to that of the Spartans in the passage from Herodotus quoted above (5.91.2), where Athens is the explicit subject. In particular, both passages suggest, through metaphors taken from the world of horse taming, the spirited strength of democratic society as opposed to the docile submission of tyrannically ruled people.

Herodotus uses the word ἰποχείριος, literally “under the hand,” to describe the condition of Athens under a tyrant, a word used also by Xenophon to describe a horse that is held in check. This corresponds to the image of the barbarian girl/horse, in the Aeschylean passage, who willingly accepts the yoke. Herodotus uses ἄνέκνυς to describe the

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18 Cf. Goldhill 1988 and Hall 1996, 12–13. Hall notes that Aeschylus’ focus on Salamis, his meager mention of Plataea (816–20), and his complete neglect of Thermopylae, Artemisium, and Mycale, show that Aeschylus aimed at honoring “the ordinary Athenian citizens who manned the ships and who had the most to gain from defending their democracy.” Hall argues that the play is concerned with “celebrating the Athenian democratic system, with its hard core of citizen-rowers.” Hall notes that the Persians are constructed as “deficient in precisely those qualities which the Athenians like to think characterized their democratic system: freedom of speech, lack of hierarchical protocol, accountability of magistrates, and protection of the individual under the laws.” See also her note on Aeschylus’ use of the word ἰπευδθύνος in line 213: “The choice of word . . . draws a political contrast between the unanswerability of Persian monarchs and the accountability of Athenian magistrates under the democracy.” For accountability under a democracy cf. Hdt. 3.80. Hall also sees the references to free speech in lines 592–93 and to freedom in lines 402–5 as direct references to these values in democratic Athens. Goldhill (1988) makes many of these points and also adds (192) that the fact that no individual Greek is named in the play suggests “the submission of the individual into the collectivity,” which is “a basic factor in fifth-century Athenian democratic ideology.”


20 For the association of the idea of a yoke with political subordination see also Aesch. Pers. 50 and Hdt. 7.8.3. Cf. Hall 1996 on this.
behavior of Athens after being liberated from tyranny, a term that could be used of the action of horse which holds its head high. The word, therefore, corresponds with Aeschylus’ description of the behavior of the Greek horse/girl who “struggled against Xerxes and tore apart the harness with her hands, unbridled seized the car and broke the yoke in two.” Both passages, it seems, are part of a wider group of terms and concepts through which the democracy legitimized itself through the fostering of a belief in the connection between democracy and civic strength in contrast to tyranny and civic weakness.

A sentence in Thucydides’ preface furthers this connection. Thucydides uses the verb κατέχειν to describe the condition of Greece during the period of the early tyrants, when “nothing worthy of mention was accomplished [ἐπράχθη δὲ οὐδὲν ... ἐργὸν ἄξιόλογον] and for a long time Greece was held down [κατείχετο] and did not accomplish anything collectively that was noteworthy [μὴ τε κοινὴ φανερὸν μηδὲν κατεργάζεσθαι]. Greece was lacking in courage throughout her cities [κατὰ πόλεις τε ἄστολμοτέρα εἶναι]” (1.17). Although Thucydides is here writing of Greece as a whole and not specifically Athens, it is plausible that, as an Athenian steeped in democratic politics, Thucydides adopted this democratic conceptual framework for his interpretation of the period of tyranny throughout Greece in archaic times. This is not to suggest that Thucydides fully endorsed the democracy’s claim to civic strength but only that he accepted the connection between tyranny and civic weakness, which was a key theme of democratic ideology. Indeed, Thucydides’ description of Pericles shows that Thucydides accepted only a modified version of the positive side of this ideology. While Thucydides celebrates the strength of Periclean Athens in contrast to authoritarian Sparta in the funeral oration, he describes the democracy of this time as rule by the worthy (κατὰ τὴν ἄξιοσιν, ἀπ’ ἀρετῆς, 2.37.1) and even rule by the leading man, Pericles (2.65.9, quoted below).

The extent to which Thucydides was influenced by the theme of tyranny/civic weakness versus democracy/civic strength, yet modified its

21 Xen. On Horsemanship 7.10
22 For an indication of how Thucydides has modified the standard definition of democracy, compare the description of democracy given in Eur. Supp. 406–8, where many of the same concepts and vocabulary are used, but emphasis is placed on the rule of the people through rotation of offices rather than on merit: “The demos rules through annual rotation of offices and it does not give a greater share to wealth but even a poor man holds an equal share [δήμως ... ἀνάσσει διαδοχάσειν ἐν μέρει ἐναρθώσας, οὐχὶ (ib. plούσι καὶ βούλου διδόσι τὸ πλείστον, άλλα χω πένης ἔχων ἰδον].” Cf. Rauflaub 1990 for a discussion of democratic ideology in this play.
contents, is shown by his use of κατέχειν in his presentation of Pericles. Thucydides crafts the oxymoronic phrase “κατείχε τὸ πλήθος ἐλευθέρως” (“he held the masses in subjection freely”) to describe the paradoxical nature of Pericles’ power over the Athenian people (2.65.8). Here Thucydides seems to be exploiting the ideological associations between κατέχειν and the forceful rule of a tyrant in order to further his claim that under Pericles Athens “was a democracy in name, but, in reality, under the rule of the leading man [ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχῆ]” (2.65.9).

Euripides also seems to exploit the tyrannical associations of κατέχειν in his play Suppliants. In the critique of democracy given by the Theban herald, it is claimed that common men are incapable of ruling wisely because they must labor for a living and are not able to educate themselves about the public good. Invoking the standard aristocratic disdain for men of low station, the herald notes that the better sort of men are pained by the sight of a base man gaining repute by “constraining the demos with his tongue [γλώσσῃ κατασχόν δήμον]” (425). Echoing themes expressed in Herodotus and Thucydides, Euripides’ herald suggests through the use of the word κατέχειν that a democracy can become a tyranny if base men become demagogues over the people.

It is important at this juncture to anticipate a possible objection to my argument that these passages reflect the importance of the association between tyranny and civic weakness on the one hand, and democracy and civic strength on the other, in Athenian democratic ideology. After all, this association occurs not only in Herodotus’ Athenian narratives and some other Athenian texts, but also in the Hippocratic treatise Airs, Waters, Places (16.3–7). Not only is this a non-Athenian text, but in


24 Cf. Rauflaub 1990 for a discussion of democratic ideology in this play.

25 Cf. Hdt. 3.82.4. For Thucydides, the idea that a democracy devolves into the rule of one man is not necessarily a bad thing; it results in good government if the ruler is intelligent and virtuous like Pericles, but can result in bad government if the ruler is base and self interested, like Cleon.

26 “Wherever men are not in control of their own affairs [ὅκου δὲ μὴ αὐτοὶ ἐχουντόν εἰσιν καρτεροὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι] and are not autonomous [μηδὲ αὐτόνομοι] but are ruled by a master [ἄλλοι δεσπόζονται], they are not concerned to cultivate their military skills . . . for their masters grow more powerful by however many great and courageous deeds they perform, while they are only rewarded with great risks and death. Men who . . . are not subject to a master [μὴ δεσπόζονται] but are autonomous [αὐτόνομοι] and work hard for themselves [ἐσπαρτής ταλαιπωρεῖν], these are the most warlike of all. For they take risks for their own benefit and they themselves carry off the rewards of their courage and the penalties of their cowardice.” Cf. chap. 23.
it, the theme is phrased in very general terms, with no specific reference to Athens. Furthermore, given the extreme paucity of information about internal politics in other Greek poleis, how can we be sure that this ideology was not widespread among Greek poleis? Could this theme have been used to justify other nondespotic, but not necessarily democratic, forms of political organization?

The short answer to these objections is that we cannot be certain that this theme either originated in Athens or existed solely in Athenian democratic ideology. The occurrence of the theme in the *Airs, Waters, Places* shows that certainly by the end of the fifth century the theme was current in intellectual circles outside Athens and was used to describe the differences between Greeks and non-Greeks generally. Nevertheless, there are several reasons for believing that this ideology was particularly important in the justification of the Athenian democracy and perhaps even existed uniquely in Athens before possibly spreading to other Greek poleis. First of all, as I shall show below, the connection between political freedom and civic strength was not used to explain Spartan military prowess in Spartan ideology. Sparta is one of the few Greek states for which we can glean some sense of its political ideology, and thus this absence is perhaps significant. Secondly, I believe that the parallels within Herodotus’ Athenian narratives and Athenian texts are striking and are the result of particularly Athenian democratic versions of this ideology. It is noteworthy indeed that the vocabulary of the Hippocratic passage is quite different from that of the texts discussed above, and the verb κατεχέων is strikingly missing. Finally, the imperial status of Athens in the mid–fifth century makes it probable that Athenian democratic ideology was widely known and a more likely source of influence on Herodotus’ narratives than the ideologies of other poleis.

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27 Whereas Herodotus refers specifically to the Athenian example in drawing his conclusion about the relation between democracy (ισχυρή) / freedom (δυνατορθήντων) and civic strength (5.78), the Hippocratic treatise refers generally to Greeks and Barbarians who are not subject to a master (μη δισποζονται) and who are autonomous (αυτόνομοι).

28 The most recent study of the Hippocratic corpus concludes that the *Airs, Waters, Places* belongs to a set of texts designed for itinerant physicians which dates to the period 410–350 B.C. (Jouanna 1999, 66). Jouanna dates Hippocrates slightly later than Herodotus (cf. 225–29).

29 Where Herodotus uses the phrases τυραννεύομενοι, ἀπαλλαχθέντες τυράννων and κατεχόμενοι (5.78) the Hippocratic treatise uses: βασιλεύεται and μη αυτοί ἐστὶ καρπεροί ἀνθρώποι μηδε αὐτόνομοι, ἀλλὰ δισποζονται (16.4). It is also worth mentioning that this theme is mentioned in *Airs, Waters, Places* only as an afterthought to the author’s main concern, namely the connection between climate, geography and the character of people (16.1–3, cf. 24) (cf. Jouanna 1999, 230).
DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY AND HERODOTUS’ *HISTORIES*

If we now return to Herodotus’ narrative of the Peisistratid tyranny in Athens, we may conclude that Herodotus’ use of κατέχειν at the beginning of the narrative reflects the association between tyranny and civic weakness that was central to Athenian democratic ideology. Herodotus uses the verb again at the end of his account, thereby concluding his account through ring composition: “And so Croesus learned that such matters held down [κατέχοντα] the Athenians at that time” (1.65.1). Thus the verb serves to summarize Athens’ position of subjection and hence weakness. This implicit association of tyranny and weakness is made explicit through Croesus’ choice to seek an alliance with Sparta instead of Athens.

DEMARATUS AND XERXES: THE INFLUENCE OF ATHENIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY ON NON-ATHENIAN NARRATIVES

So far I have argued that Herodotus’ use of the word κατέχειν in his Athenian narratives reflects fifth-century Athenian democratic ideology and specifically the ideological association between democracy and civic strength. In the second part of this paper, I argue that certain elements of democratic ideology, including the association between democracy and civic strength, influence Herodotus’ presentation of non-Athenian narratives. In particular, I show that the conversation between the exiled Spartan king Demaratus and the Persian king Xerxes is influenced by this association. Although the connection between political freedom and civic strength is generalized in this passage (and in other texts) to fit a panhellenic context, I argue that close structural and thematic correspondences with Aeschylus’ *Persians* suggest Athenian influence on the formulation of this theme in this passage. This is not to deny that Demaratus is represented in some aspects as typically Spartan (see below on 7.102.2–3 and 7.104.3–5), but only to argue that his statements about “the Greeks” as well as the whole structure of the narrative are derived from Athenian ideological representations of the connection between political freedom and civic strength.

It is important to state at the beginning that I am not so much interested in establishing direct Aeschylean influence on Herodotus as in detecting the influence of Athenian political values and discourse on

30 For this theme in *Airs, Waters, Places*, see text above and preceding notes 26–28.
Herodotus. Thus, when I suggest that Aeschylus and Herodotus share a particular theme or dramatic structure, I am not necessarily claiming direct influence, although this may be the case in some instances.\textsuperscript{31} Rather, I am arguing first that the dramatic presentation of certain political values in Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians} reflects and itself helped to construct some of the ways that Athenian democratic culture represented its political values to itself. Secondly, I argue that the presence of these same political values in similar dramatic structures in Herodotus’ narrative suggests that Herodotus was influenced by specifically Athenian ways of representing political values.\textsuperscript{32}

The conversation between Demaratus and Xerxes in Herodotus takes place on the eve of Xerxes’ march against Greece (7.101.1).\textsuperscript{33} The conversation follows Xerxes’ review of his troops which includes a long catalogue of the Persian forces (7.61ff.). A similar dramatic setting is found in Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians}; the play opens with a catalogue of Persian forces (16ff) and is followed by a conversation between Xerxes’ mother, Atossa, and the chorus of Persian elders. In both Herodotus and Aeschylus,

\begin{itemize}
  \item See references in note 16.
  \item It is important to remember that tragedy is only one possible locus for the reflection and construction of Athenian democratic ideology. Athenian democratic ideology would have been articulated, negotiated, and reinforced in all the public fora of Athens, including the assembly, courts, and festival competitions as well as the informal gatherings in the market stalls and barber shops. Unfortunately, the evidence for much of this public discussion is lost to us, but we can catch glimpses of what we may be missing in, for instance, the recently discovered Simonides papyrus, which features an elegiac poem celebrating the victory at Salamis (see Boedeker and Sider 1996). Cf. also, for instance, Pindar’s reference in \textit{Pythian} 1.75–80 to the songs that he sings in Athens, in contrast to the songs that he sings at Sparta: “From [the battle of] Salamis I shall try to win for my reward the favor of the Athenians, but, at Sparta, I shall tell of the battle before Cithaeron [Plataea].” As Deborah Boedeker writes in reference to poets who wrote elegiac poems describing the Greek victories over the Persians, “[I]t is altogether likely that their versions greatly influenced popular ‘memory’ and understanding of those events” (1996, 227). I would add that these versions not only influenced popular “memory,” but themselves reflected and helped to construct popular ideology about the meaning of the victory in the Persian wars. These poems, as much as tragedy and the other loci of the negotiation of popular ideology, may have influenced the version of democratic ideology given to us by Herodotus. Thus we should not necessarily consider Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians} to be the direct or sole source of this ideology for Herodotus.
  \item The episode between Xerxes and Demaratus follows the narrative pattern of a conversation between an oriental monarch and wise advisor, often a Greek exile (cf. Croesus and Solon, 1.30.2). Herodotus uses this pattern to develop certain themes which usually have ethical or political significance. On this narrative pattern cf. Bischoff 1932, Lattimore 1939, and more recently, Boedeker 1987, 191–92.
\end{itemize}
the size and wealth of the Persian force are emphasized and form the background to the subsequent conversation. Both catalogues serve to underline by contrast the small size and relative poverty of the Greek forces.

After reviewing his forces, Xerxes is elated and asks rhetorically whether the Greeks will remain and fight him (7.101.2). Xerxes answers his own question in the negative on the basis of the Greeks’ insufficient numbers (7.101.3). Xerxes’ question takes the form of a boast (κόμπος), a type of behavior contrary to Greek notions of piety and moderation and typically associated with tyrants, especially in Athenian tragedy. In Aeschylus’ Persians, Atossa makes the same assumption that military victory is determined solely by numerical superiority. When the Persian elders state that the Athenians are the key to Persian conquest of all of Greece, the queen immediately assumes that the Athenians have a large army: “They must then have a large supply of men for their army?” (δῶδε τις πάρεστιν αὐτοῖς ἄνδρολήθεια στρατοῦ; 235).

The audience of Aeschylus’ Persians and Herodotus’ Histories of course knew that the Greeks had only small armies compared with the Persians and that the Greeks nevertheless defeated the Persians. Thus there is dramatic irony in the Persian characters’ assumption of a connection between numerical superiority and military strength. The tension between the statements of these characters and the knowledge of the audience is only dispelled, as we shall see, through subsequent action, in which the Persians’ assumptions are shown to be ill-founded and the connection between political freedom and civic strength is affirmed.

What is important for my purposes is that the similarity of the dramatic movement of Aeschylus’ play and Herodotus’ Histories, each serving to affirm the connection between political system and civic strength, suggests

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34 Herodotus estimates the size of the Persian force as 1,700,000 (7.60.1), describes each of the participating races, and mentions that the elite corps of Persian soldiers, the Immortals, were distinguished by copious amounts of gold (7.83.2). Aeschylus, in his catalogue, emphasizes the size and wealth of the Persian forces by using words signifying great numbers of men (πλῆθος, 40, ὀχλος, 42, 53, πολυάνδρου, 73) and compounds of the word “gold” (πολύχρυσος, 45, 53; χρυσοσόμω, 80). Cf. Hall 1996, 24–25.

35 Cf. Aesch. Pers., where the ghost of Darius attributes the destruction of the Persian force to the vengeance of Zeus for “over boastful thoughts” (ὑπερκόμπου ἑγὼν φρονημάτων) and “over boastful daring” (ὑπερκόμπῳ θράσει) (827–31). Later in Herodotus’ narrative, it is Xerxes who warns Demaratus against empty boasts (7.103.2). Herodotus’ audience of course recognizes Xerxes as the overconfident booster, thus lending dramatic irony to Xerxes’ words here. Dramatic irony is prevalent in this narrative (see below).

36 Cf. her similar question at 334–36.
the influence of Athenian ways of representing the value of its political system to itself. As we saw in the first part of this article, the connection between democracy and civic strength was central to Athenian political ideology. In what follows, I trace the parallel dramatic movement of Herodotus’ Histories and Aeschylus’ Persians in order to show how intimately tied each work is to this central Athenian political tenet.

Before responding to Xerxes’ boast, Demaratus first asks whether he should speak truthfully or in a manner that will please Xerxes. Despite Xerxes’ subsequent request that Demaratus speak truthfully, Demaratus’ question further defines Xerxes as tyrant since fear of speaking freely is a characteristic of tyrannical rule in democratic ideology, just as free speech (παρρησία) is characteristic of democracy. Comparison with the theme of free speech in Athenian tragedy suggests that the absence of free speech under Xerxes receives emphasis in order to reinforce through negative example the free speech characteristic of democratic regimes. In Aeschylus’ Persians, the Persian elders fear that, after the defeat of Xerxes, the subjects of Persia will no longer keep silent but will be able to speak freely (ἐλεύθερα βάζειν) (591–97). In somewhat closer parallel with the Demaratus episode, at lines 694–706, both the chorus and the queen are struck by fear of the ghost of Darius and are afraid to tell the truth of the defeat of the Persian army to him. Both works, therefore, evoke the value of free speech in Greek, and especially Athenian democratic, political culture through their representations of the Persian king.

When Demaratus is given leave to speak safely, he disagrees with Xerxes’ view of the invincibility of the Persian forces and expresses his belief in the superiority of the Greeks. Demaratus dismisses the value of numerical superiority (7.102.3) and instead asserts that due to some fundamental moral, intellectual, and physical qualities, the Greeks will fight courageously whatever the odds. “Poverty [πενη] has always been the companion of Greece, but physical and moral excellence [ἀρετή] has been acquired through intelligence [σοφία] and strong law [νόμος ἰσχυρός].

37 For free speech as an essential freedom under the Athenian democracy, cf. Raaflaub 1980, 1983, and 1985; Ober 1989, 296–97. Herodotus uses the term ἰσημορία (“equal right to speak”) as a synonym for democracy at 5.78. In the Demaratus episode, the theme of free speech is picked up again at 7.104.1, where Demaratus significantly states that he was forced (ἡνέγκασας) by Xerxes to speak the truth. For a discussion of the theme of freedom of speech in the Histories, see Hohi 1974.

By using this [physical and moral excellence (ἄρετή)], Greece wards off [ασμόνεται] poverty and despotism (δεσποσύνη)]” (7.102.1). Several aspects of Demaratus’ claim suggest Athenian influence over Herodotus’ formulation of this passage.39 First of all, his claim that the Greeks use their physical and moral excellence (ἄρετή) in order to ward of despotism (δεσποσύνη) evokes the theme, so prominent in Athenian democratic ideology, of the association between civic strength and political values. ἄρετή denotes military prowess above all,40 while δεσποσύνη, like τύραννος and μοναρχία, indicates the rule of one man and a whole set of associations and oppositions that formed a central nexus in Athenian political thought.41 Despotism implies slavery (δουλισύνη) and is opposed to the freedom characteristic of democratic regimes.42 The centrality

39 It is difficult to pin down exactly how specific this influence is. It is possible that Herodotus heard the story of the conversation between Xerxes and Demaratus with its emphasis on the value of political freedom from Athenian sources. A more plausible view is that Herodotus heard from an oral informant only that the exiled Spartan king Demaratus joined the court of Xerxes. Herodotus himself then shaped his account of Demaratus’ role in Xerxes’ campaign in accordance with the connection made in democratic ideology between political freedom and civic strength.

40 For this translation of ἄρετή, see Adkins (1960), who traces the development in the meaning of ἄρετή from Homer to Aristotle and shows how the term develops from meaning “military prowess and the skills which promote success in war” (32) to include the more “quiet” virtues, such as wisdom (σοφία) and justice (δικαιοσύνη), which were conducive to good order (εὐνομία) in the polis (74–78). The military connotation seems foremost in this passage.

41 On the opposition between tyranny and democracy in democratic ideology see Lanza 1977; Bleiken 1979, 157: “Die Tyrannis ist ganz offensichtlich bis über die Mitte des Jahrhunderts hinaus der einzige Gegenpol zur Demokratie geblieben.” Raaflaub 1983, 522–23: “[Tyranny] kept its prominence in political thought on democracy because it served the useful function of representing a system which radically denied all the values and the achievements of the democracy. By refuting the negative features of tyranny, it was possible to emphasize by stark contrast some of the positive aspects of democracy. Oligarchy was less sharply distinguished from democracy (in fact, the moderate forms of both were very similar to each other); it could, therefore, not provide an equally distinct contrast.” Cf. Gorgini 1993, 16–38 and 142–86. See McGlew 1993, 183–212, for the view that the image of the tyrant served as a positive model for “the individual and collective possession of freedom” (185) in Athenian democratic ideology. I disagree with this view because it isolates one characteristic of the tyrant (his personal freedom) from its ideological context and equates it with democratic freedom.

42 Cf. Murray 1988, 475: “The [Ionian] Revolt in fact marks a decisive step in the creation of that polarity between despotic Persia and Greek democracy; freedom from Persia and freedom from tyranny become identified.” Cf. Momigliano 1979, 142: “We do not know where and by whom freedom was first associated with democracy, freedom of speech thus becoming one of the most important aspects of democracy. Whether or not . . .
of these binary oppositions to democratic ideology is perhaps best illustrated by a fragment of Democritus: ἡ ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ πενίᾳ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς δυνάμεις καλεομένης εὐδαιμονίης τοσοῦτον ἐστὶ σίρετωτέρη, ὥστος ἐλευθερίᾳ δουλεῖς (fr. 251, Diels-Kranz; “Poverty in a democracy is more desirable than the so-called prosperity in a tyranny inasmuch as freedom is more desirable than slavery”). In addition to illustrating the importance of the contrast between democracy and tyranny and freedom and slavery in democratic ideology, this fragment also interestingly indicates the importance of the opposition between poverty and wealth, an opposition that is also featured in Demaratus’ speech. This final opposition is partly evoked also by the catalogues of the Persian forces that precede the conversations in Herodotus and Aeschylus. As we saw, the wealth and size of the Persian army was emphasized and served to underline by contrast the small size and relative poverty of the Greek armies.\footnote{The contrast between poverty and wealth may owe something to the contrast between rugged, infertile lands with harsh climates (Greece) and rich, fertile lands with moderate climates (Asia) which we see articulated by Herodotus at 9.122.3 and in the Hippocratic treatise \textit{Airs, Waters, Places} (16.24). In both texts, a harsh land and climate is associated with a courageous people while a moderate land and climate is associated with a weak people. The connection between climate, land and character may have originated in Ionian science and have been widespread by the time of Herodotus and Hippocrates (Jouanna 1999, 229). The connection between political system and civic strength is much more prominent in Herodotus than the connection between climate/geography and character. Conversely, the Hippocratic treatise emphasizes the role of climate and geography and only mentions the role of political systems in an afterthought (see note 29 above). This difference between Herodotus and the Hippocratic author is due to the greater influence of Athenian democratic ideology on Herodotus, as I have argued above. For the “poor land motif” in Herodotus cf. Bischoff 1932, 78–83 and Cobet 1971, 174–76.}

To return to the central opposition between Persian despotism and democratic freedom, Aeschylus’ \textit{Persians} itself illustrates the importance of this opposition in Athenian democratic ideology. When Queen Atossa questions the Persian elders about Athens, she assumes that it is ruled by a monarch. She asks: τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἐπεστὶ κάπιτεσπόζει στρατῷ (241; “Who is their chief? Who is master of their army?”). Political freedom, and, in the explicitly Athenian frame of reference of Atossa’s question, democratic freedom is affirmed in the response that Atossa receives: οὐτίνος δούλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ’ ὑπήκοοι (242; “They are called [the] Ionian citizens . . . regarded democratic freedom as the antithesis of Persian despotism, the antithesis was clear to Spartans and Athenians.”}
neither the slaves nor the subjects of any single man”).

44 In the *Persians*, the contrast evoked is between Persian despotism and the free democratic political system of the Athenians. In Herodotus, the contrast is generalized to fit the panhellenic context of Herodotus’ narrative. In this context, “Athens” is replaced by the more general term “Greeks.” Nevertheless, when Demaratus claims that the Greeks will fight courageously to ward off despotism, he is drawing a link between the strength of the Greeks and their political values, a link that parallels Athenian ways of presenting the value of democracy. As we have seen, the linkage of military strength with political values was a key move of Athenian democratic ideology.

Demaratus next narrows the discussion to the Spartans alone, and it is in this part of the dialogue that elements of Spartan ideology intrude upon what I have so far argued to be a narrative largely influenced by Athenian democratic ideology. Demaratus claims that the Spartans will fight no matter how small their numbers and no matter how many of the other Greeks go over to the Persians (7.102.2–3). Demaratus is alluding here to the famous Spartan military ethic of unflinching military courage, which is evident already in the seventh-century poetry of Tyrtaeus (fr. 10, 11, 12), and is reflected in Herodotus’ own narrative of the Spartan stand at Thermopylae (7.219–28). Demaratus himself articulates this element of Spartan ideology more directly in the culminating lines of this dialogue: “[A]lthough the Spartans are free [ἐλεύθεροι], they are not wholly

44 Eur. *Supp.* has a similar dramatic structure in the debate between the Theban herald and the Athenian king, Theseus. The herald asks who the tyrant of Athens is and is rebuked for expecting a tyrant: “You began your speech incorrectly by seeking a tyrant here, for our city is not ruled by one man, but is a free city. The demos rules through the annual rotation of public offices and the demos does not give a greater share to wealth, but even a poor man has an equal share” (403–8).

45 Goldhill (1988, 191) reads this passage in the same way and briefly cites Hdt. 7.103 in relation to it. He writes, “[Atossa’s] assumption that men without a single ruler cannot fight well points to the regular opposition of monarchy (tyranny) and democracy as alternative systems of power (so important also in Herodotus cf. e.g., Her. 7.103).”

46 Pohlenz (1966, 15) suggests that Herodotus is directly influenced by the passage from Aesch. *Pers.*, but fails to note that the Aeschylus passage refers specifically to Athens while the Herodotus passage refers generally to the difference between Greeks and Barbarians. I argue that both passages reflect Athenian democratic ideology (whether or not that there is direct influence between texts) and that Herodotus therefore is influenced in the formulation of this passage by Athenian democratic ideology specifically, and not generalized Greek ideology.
free [οὖ πάντα ἐλεύθεροι εἰσί]; for law [νόμος] is their master [δεσπότης] and they fear [ὑποδειμάινοντι] it far more than your men fear you. For indeed they do whatever that one [law] orders; and it always orders the same thing: it does not permit them to flee any mass of men in battle, but commands that they remain in their battle ranks and either conquer or die” (7.104–5). This aspect of Spartan ideology of course had a long Nachleben, most memorably illustrated in the undoubtedly fictitious saying of a Spartan woman who told her son to come back from battle with his shield or on it (Plut. Sayings of Spartan Women, 16). It is noteworthy, however, that in these anecdotes and in Demaratus’ words, Spartan military courage does not depend on political freedom, as Athenian military strength does in Athenian democratic ideology. Spartan courage depends on law/custom (νόμος) and is socially enforced through shame. Fear of social humiliation motivates Spartan courage, as can be seen by the examples of those Spartans who avoided death at Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.231–32; cf. 9.71). In Athenian ideology, by contrast, men fight courageously in order to preserve their political freedom and because they know that that they are fighting for themselves rather than in the interest of a single ruler (5.78).

One may wonder whether this difference in the representation of sources of Spartan and Athenian military strength is derived primarily from Spartan ideology or Athenian ideology. I would argue that the representation of Spartan military courage as a result of the compulsion of law and fear of social censure, although originating in Spartan traditions of military valor, is here represented from an Athenian perspective. Ellen Millender, in fact, makes this very argument about this passage in Herodotus.47 Millender argues that Demaratus’ comparison of Spartan law to a despot suggests that Spartan obedience is a product of despotic compulsion and force. She argues that this representation is derived from Athenian democratic ideology, in which Athenian natural courage is opposed to Spartan state-induced courage. For support, Millender notes that Thucydides contrasts the sources of Athenian and Spartan military courage in terms that are strikingly similar to Demaratus’ words and that reflect unfavorably on Sparta. The passage occurs in Pericles’ funeral oration: “Indeed, although we [Athenians] prefer to encounter danger relying not on the laws [μὴ μετὰ νόμων] more than on our natural courage [τρόπων ἄνδρείας], it happens that we do not toil in advance of sufferings which are still in the future nor do we enter into such dangers

47 Millender (forthcoming).
less courageously than those who are always training [for war]” (2.39.4). As Millender notes, Thucydides compares Spartan reliance on law (νόμος) with Athenian natural courage. The claim of Herodotus’ Demaratus, therefore, that the Spartans will fight courageously because of their obedience to law (νόμος), although ostensibly derived from the Spartan ideal of military valor, may in fact carry an undercurrent of criticism of Sparta when viewed from Athenian perspective. If we accept the evidence of Thucydides, then in the early years of the Peloponnesian War—the very time when Herodotus composed his Histories—the Athenians partly validated their democracy by its liberal attitude to military training in contrast to the authoritarian rigor of the Spartan military system. Thus Herodotus may have formulated even this part of the Demaratus and Xerxes narrative under the influence of Athenian democratic ideology.

Although Xerxes at first picks up on Demaratus’ allusion to the Spartan ideal of military courage, his principal objection to Demaratus’ claims seems to respond more to Athenian ideology than to Spartan. Xerxes at first laughs at Demaratus’ boast of Spartan courage and suggests that since Demaratus was a Spartan king, then, according to Spartan custom (κατὰ νόμους τοῦς ὑμετέρους), Demaratus should be prepared to fight single-handedly twice as many men as one of the regular Spartan soldiers. This gibe alludes to the Spartan custom of allowing kings double portions at feasts (Hdt. 6.57.1). Yet Xerxes’ more serious response to Demaratus is based on an assumed connection between political system and military courage which as we have seen is central to Athenian democratic ideology. Xerxes asks Demaratus incredulously,

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48 Laws were of course both practically and ideologically very important to the Athenian democracy as well as to the Spartans. For the Athenians, law was crucial for the maintenance of their political ideals, especially democratic equality (cf. Eur. Supp. 429–38, Thuc. 2.37.3, and the Ephebic oath, transmitted in a fourth century inscription [cf. Siewert 1977] and by Pollux 8.105, Stobaeus 4.1.8). Nevertheless, the use of the concept of obedience to the laws as the specific source of military strength seems not to have been part of Athenian democratic ideology and rather to have been used by the Athenians to characterize the Spartan military system in contrast to their own system. For a provocative discussion of Athenian attitudes to written law see Steiner (1994, 227–41). Interestingly, Steiner (237) shows that some Athenian authors equated Athenian laws to a master (δεσπότης), e.g., Pl. Crit. 50e) although she also notes the opposite association, i.e., written laws are the safeguard of democracy.

49 Raaflaub 1985, 294–95 argues, on the other hand, that Demaratus’ claim about the restraint that nomos imposes on freedom in Sparta is a specifically Spartan variation on the general Greek concept of freedom.

50 See How and Wells 1912 on this point.
How could a thousand or even ten thousand or even fifty thousand, if indeed they are all equally free and not ruled by one man [ἐόντες γε ἐλεύθεροι πάντες ὁμοίως καὶ μὴ ὑπ’ ἕνος ἀρχόμενοι] stand against such an army [as mine]? . . . Indeed, if they were ruled by one man [ὑπὸ . . . ἕνος ἀρχόμενοι] according to our custom [κατὰ τρόπον τῶν ἰμέτερον], they would become better than they are by nature [παρὰ τὴν ἐνοτὴν φύσιν] since they fear this man [δειμαίνοντες τοῦτον] and they would go forward into battle forced by a whip [ἀναγκαζόμενοι μάστιγα], although they are fewer facing more. But since they are free [ἀνεμένοι . . . ἔς το ἐλεύθερον] they would do neither of these things. (7.103.3–4)

The idea that Persian military forces are superior to Spartan because they are ruled by one man seems ill-suited as an objection to claims of Spartan military superiority. First of all, the Spartans were commanded on campaign by one of their kings, thus making Xerxes’ hypothetical “if they were ruled by one man” rather incongruous in reference to the Spartans.51 Second, the Spartans based their claims to military courage on obedience to law and social custom, not on their political system. Xerxes’ objection is better suited to Athenian claims of military superiority since Athens’ army was commanded by a board of democratically elected generals and the Athenians did in fact associate their military strength with their political system, as we have seen. Indeed, Xerxes’ argument seems to have a direct referent, namely Athenian claims to superiority based on the fact that they are not ruled by a single ruler but are free. Xerxes’ argument for the superiority of an army ruled by a single ruler contrasts sharply with Herodotus’ statement concerning the connection between democracy and civic strength at Athens (5.78). If Herodotus’ statement at 5.78 is indeed reflective of widespread Athenian democratic beliefs, as argued in the first part of this article, then Xerxes’ words seem designed to reinforce Athenian democratic beliefs through negative example. Indeed, while making his argument for monarchical rule, Xerxes evokes many aspects of despotic rule, which, according to democratic ideology, contribute to the weakness and cowardice of a people.52

51 That Xerxes (Herodotus) is not thinking specifically of the Spartans in this argument is further suggested by his reference to the “Greeks” (Ἑλλήνες), not the Spartans alone, in several places in the following sentences (7.103.4–5).

52 Romm (1998, 184) notes that the contrast between rule of one man and the rule of law in the Demaratus episode is balanced by Herodotus’ observation that the Thracians are the most numerous race (Ἰθνῶς μέγιστον) after the Indians and that they would be invincible (ἀμαχον) and the most powerful race of all by far (πολλῷ κράτιστον πάντων ἰθνῶν)
Xerxes’ use of fear and compulsion to manage his troops evokes two central motifs in the construction of the tyrant in Athenian democratic ideology. Fear (φόβος) is the characteristic emotion felt both by the tyrant toward his subjects and by subjects toward a tyrant.\(^{53}\) Compulsion (ἀνάγκη), along with fear, is the principal means by which the tyrant controls his subjects;\(^{54}\) it forms the ideological counterpart to freedom and the management of affairs by all people equally.\(^{55}\) The whip, of

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\(^{53}\) For a subject’s fear of speaking freely to a tyrant see note 32 and accompanying text. For subjects’ fear of the tyrant in general cf. charts in Lateiner 1989, 172–79. Fear of the tyrant is a frequent feature of tyranny in tragedy. In Sophocles’ Antigone and Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound, for example, minor characters illustrate the standard fear of a tyrant, which the heroes of these plays lack (cf. Ant. 82–83; 228–30; PV 41, 53, 180, 542). For a tyrant’s fear and suspicion of his subjects cf. Aesch. PV 224–25; Hdt. 3.80.4; Arist. Pol. 1313b30–32. See also Lanza 1977, 233–36.

\(^{54}\) The character of Zeus in the Prometheus Bound, illustrates many of the features of the tyrant in fifth-century Athens, and the themes of compulsion and force are prominent among the characteristics of his rule. Zeus’ henchmen Κράτως and Βίο (Power and Might) boldly illustrate the importance of these concepts in the representation of tyranny in democratic ideology. Noteworthy is the metaphor used by Prometheus at line 108: ἀνάγκαις ταῖσθε ἐνέξεσθαι, where the image of the yoke with its notion of the submission of an animal to a man is evoked. Metaphors from the world of animal domestication are frequently used to represent the compulsion and force characteristic of tyrannical rule in democratic ideology (see notes 18–20 and accompanying text). Other important characteristics of Zeus in the PV are his disregard of established laws (149, 186, 403), his harshness (35, 186, 77), and even his use of the whip (682).

\(^{55}\) For the management of affairs by all the people equally under a democracy cf. Otanes’ description of democracy (Hdt. 3.80.6): πλῆθος . . . ἄρχον . . . βουλεύματα . . . πάντα ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἀναφέρει. Cf. Hdt. 3.142.3 and 4.161.3.
course, is primarily associated with the rule of a master over slaves and evokes the compulsion and lack of freedom under Xerxes’ rule.\textsuperscript{56} Xerxes’ argument for the importance of a single ruler to the courage and success of an army, therefore, forms through its details and language a negative exemplum for the ideals of democracy. While the context in the narrative leads Herodotus to adapt these ideals to Panhellenic values—Greek instead of specifically Athenian values—the roots of this dramatic presentation appear grounded in Athenian, not Spartan or generalized Greek, modes of representing the difference between political freedom and despotism.

If we now turn from the speeches to the action of the narrative, we shall see that the narrative of events serves to confirm the connection between political system and military strength which is drawn in the conversation. Xerxes’ method of managing his troops is shown to be nothing short of disastrous in the narrative of the battle that follows. In his description of the battle of Thermopylae, Herodotus emphasizes the weakness, cowardice and disorder of the Persian forces. He does this even though the Persians defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae:

When the two sides came together outside the narrow pass, many of the Barbarians were falling [ἐπιτοπον πλήθει πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων]. For, from behind the leaders of the divisions, holding whips, were striking each man, driving them forwards [ὁπίσθε γὰρ οἱ ἡγεμόνες τῶν τελέων ἐχοντες μάστιγος ἔρρατιςζον πάντα ἄνδρα, οἷεὶ ἐκ τὸ πρόσω ἐποτρύνοντες]. The result was that many of them [πολλοὶ] were falling into the sea and perishing, but far more [πολλῷ δὲ ἔτι πλεύνες] were trampled alive by one another [κατεπτάντον ζωὶ ὑπ’ ἄλληλων]. (7.223.3)

Similarly, in his account of the battle of Salamis, Herodotus contrasts the good order and discipline of the Greeks with the lack of order and discipline of the Barbarians: “Most of the Persian fleet was destroyed . . . some by the Athenians and some by the Aeginetans. For in as much as the Greeks fought in good order and with discipline [σὺν κόσμῳ . . . καὶ κατὰ τάξιν] the Barbarians were neither in order or doing anything in an intelligent manner [τῶν δὲ βαρβάρων οὔτε τεταγμένων . . . οὔτε σὺν νόῳ ποιεόντων οὐδέν]” (8.86).

\textsuperscript{56} For the whip as associated with the despotitic rule of a Persian monarch cf. Xen. \textit{Anabasis} 3.4.26 and Momigliano 1979, 146. For the whip as a potent symbol of the relationship between master and slave cf. Hdt. 4.3.
Aeschylus’ *Persians* shares this narrative pattern of a conversation followed by action illustrative of the ideological differences expressed in the conversation. The thematic and structural correspondence between the Demaratus episode and Aeschylus’ *Persians* shows that this ideology was not simply part of panhellenic ideology but was derived from the ideology of the Athenian democracy. As we have seen, Atossa makes the same assumption as Xerxes about the military superiority of a numerous people ruled by a monarch. First she assumes that Athens has a large army, and next she makes the assumption that Athens has an absolute monarch. When she receives the response that the Athenians “are slaves to no one,” Atossa cannot believe that, without a monarch, the Athenians could be a courageous people. The objection she raises seems to rest on the assumption articulated more fully by Xerxes in the *Histories*, that the fear and compulsion inherent in monarchic rule are necessary for courageous action in warfare: πῶς ὁδὲν μένοιεν ἄνδρας πολεμίους ἐπήλυθας; (243; “But how then can they keep their ground against foreign invaders?”) Just as was the case with Xerxes in the *Histories*, Atossa’s beliefs are shown to be false through the subsequent description of the outcome of the Persian Wars. Following this conversation, a messenger arrives and announces the total destruction of the Persian force (255). Furthermore, in his descriptions of the battle of Salamis, the messenger emphasizes the weakness and disorder of the Persian forces and the good order and courage of the Greeks. Aeschylus uses words such as ρόθος (a confused, inarticulate sound) (406, 462) and ῥεῦμα (a disordered stream) (412, cf. 88) to describe the Persian forces. Although the Persians maintain order and discipline initially under the threat of death from Xerxes (374–83), as soon as they are confronted by the courageous Greeks, they are stricken by fear (φόβος, 391), order breaks down (412–16), and they soon flee (422–23). In contrast, the Greeks appear courageous (ἐνενίσχυσε ἤρασε, 394), well ordered (ἐντάκτως, κόσμω, 399–402), and intelligent (οὐκ ἀφρασμόνως, 417).

The dramatic structure of Aeschylus’ *Persians* therefore is very similar to that of Herodotus’ narrative. Both use dramatic irony and the overturning of the Persian characters’ assumptions in order to confirm the central connection between political freedom and civic strength. We have seen that this association was a central tenet of Athenian democratic ideology as expressed both in Herodotus’ Athenian narratives and

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57 Goldhill (1988, 192) makes this point and notes the importance of the vocabulary used to describe the Greeks and Persians. See also Hall 1996 on this.
in other Athenian texts, primarily Aeschylus’ *Persians*. It seems plausible therefore that the centrality of this ideological connection in Herodotus’ treatment of the Greek victory in the Persian wars is influenced by specifically Athenian modes of validating its political values.

**CONCLUSION**

I have argued that Herodotus’ Athenian narratives are partly derived from polis traditions and thus may reveal some aspects of Athenian democratic ideology. Specifically I argued that Herodotus’ narratives of early Athenian history reflect the importance of the association between democracy and civic strength in Athenian democratic ideology. I showed this by examining the use of the verb κατέχειν in the *Histories* and some Athenian dramatic and historical texts. I argued that κατέχειν was an ideologically charged word which was associated in Athenian political ideology with the idea of the weakness inherent in communities ruled by tyrants in contrast to the strength of free democratic societies. In the second part of this article, I argued that structural and thematic parallels between Aeschylus’ *Persians* and the Demaratus episode in Herodotus, as well as Herodotus’ representation of the Greek victory, are shaped in part by the centrality of the connection between political freedom and civic strength in Athenian democratic ideology.

If my argument is correct that the association between political system and civic strength originated at Athens and then spread from there, one might further speculate about when this ideology arose. I would argue that the antithesis between tyranny/civic weakness and democracy/civic strength crystallized only after the experience of the Persian Wars.58 Faced with a living example of a despotic regime that met with thorough and repeated defeat, the Athenians readily exploited these events as a justification of their democratic form of government. The growing tensions with Sparta after the Persian wars may have accelerated the trend toward the ideological justification of democracy. The association between democracy and civic strength, therefore, did not arise with the foundation of democracy in 508–507 B.C. It was only in later reflection on the outcome of the Persian wars that the Athenians retrojected their contemporary military strength onto the earlier begin-

58 See Murray 1988, Hall 1989, Cartledge 1993 and 1995, and notes 41 and 42 above for the impact of victory in the Persian war on Greek identity.
nnings of their democracy. It was at this time that the victory of the Athenians over the Boeotians and Chalcidians in 506 may have been elevated to become the exemplum of democratic strength that it is in Herodotus’ Histories.

University of Michigan
e-mail: forsyke@umich.edu

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