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BENJAMIN ALLGAIER: *Embedded Inscriptions in Herodotus and Thucydides*. Philippika 157. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2022. ISBN 978-3-447-11791-3; ISBN (e-book) 978-3-447-39257-0. VIII, 198 pp. EUR 49.

This work is the published version of Benjamin Allgaier's dissertation (University of Heidelberg, 2019). It serves as a compact general introduction to inscriptions mentioned in Herodotus' *Histories* and Thucydides' *History* for a reader who, like myself, is not proficient in epigraphic studies but has a sufficient knowledge of Herodotus and Thucydides. More importantly, Allgaier offers fourteen case studies of specific epigraphic acts analysed in great detail along with a comprehensive examination of their narrative role. In addition to epigraphic analysis, Allgaier engages in a discussion of the historiographical status of these works and with Herodotus, in particular, as a narrator. The progress made lately on these subjects is presented in such a manner that a student interested in these themes can find a good reading list in the pages of this book.

The book consists of three parts. In the introduction, Allgaier defines an epigraphic act in literature, introduces all the inscriptions found in Herodotus' *Histories* and Thucydides' *History*, and problematizes their narrative function in these works. In the first part of the case studies, he delves deeper into a discussion of the epigraphic activities of Herodotus. They consist of several Persian inscriptions set up by King Darius, funerary inscriptions from Lydian Alyattes, Egyptian pyramids, the Babylonian queen Nitocris and those set up to commemorate the battle of Thermopylae. In a smaller, third part he gives a similar treatment to a selection of Thucydides' epigraphic acts. There is a discussion of the Plataean Tripod and changes to it over time, the commemoration of the end of Pisistratid tyranny in Athens, and inscriptions of Greek peace treaties.

The first case study of Darius' epigraphic activities is a narrative analysis from three different parts of *Histories* in which King Darius sets up inscriptions. The inscriptions, which have not survived, and the extant Bisitun (Behistun) inscription, to which Allgaier compares them, all assert Darius' imperial power. On the other hand, they also reveal the limits of that power, as Herodotus tells us how the stelai put up by Darius were later repurposed (Hdt. 4.87). This serves to show the contrast Herodotus tried to illuminate in telling about the permanent stelai and their impermanent

preservation. It is ironic that we have the knowledge of them through a textual source rather than through epigraphic evidence.

In the section about Alyattes' funerary inscription, Allgaier refers to the lack of archaeological evidence as proof that the tomb did not have five pillars set up by the different contributors as Herodotus described it. Similar tombs have only one pillar. In doing this he leans, to my mind, too heavily on critics of this story. It is problematic for checking the veracity of Herodotus' stories if the cases where we know he was wrong are treated equally with cases where there is no proof either way.

The role of inscriptions in the depiction of Egyptian pharaohs is well articulated. Herodotus uses them to mediate information about the past. Citing inscriptions and stating that he tells us "what the Egyptians say" are means of distancing himself from the negative picture that the Egyptians paint of past pharaohs, especially Cheops. Allgaier could have examined more the reasons why the statements given to Herodotus were negative. We know that the informants were Egyptian priests who had their own allegiances and enemies with the past rulers of Egypt and used different narrative techniques to amplify their message. One of them was ridicule, which explains the story told to Herodotus about the name of the area of the pyramids. The Egyptians called it by the name of a local shepherd rather than the pharaohs. Allgaier also notes how Herodotus re-established the connection between the pyramids and their pharaohs.

The chapter on the inscribed warning in the tomb of Nitocris, the Babylonian queen, discusses the probability of such an inscription ever having existed. There is no archaeological evidence of the tomb and the identity of Nitocris is now lost. This chapter and the last chapter on Herodotus' epigraphic acts, the ones about the Battle of Thermopylae, discuss the memorialization through inscriptions and the written text. Allgaier notes the interesting interplay between the permanence of epigraphic records and written records. And contrary to expectation, the books of Herodotus and Thucydides survived and the inscriptions did not. Allgaier uses this as proof that the project these historians set out to do succeeded, and they did indeed create a permanent record.

Allgaier returns to the question of impermanence in the following chapters about the Plataean tripod in Thucydides' *History*. The reworking of inscriptions and the discussion between Plataeans and Spartans that ended in destruction of Plataea have been interpreted as a negative foil for the *History's* claim to permanence by Jonas Grethlein and others. Allgaier answers these interpretations by noting how the list of cities serving Greece in the Persian Wars in the Plataean tripod is still intact during the Plataean Debate. So the very monument is both a "prime example of the malleability of epigraphic commemoration" and a "stable source of information", as Allgaier describes it.

Allgaier engages in discussion with earlier research with great rigour. He mostly builds on the German narratological tradition of historiographical research and agrees with its main authors. There are more disagreements with the works of Deborah Steiner and Stephanie West. Allgaier's reading of Herodotus differs from Steiner's in a similar fashion to the interpretations offered by Jan Haywood, who published an article on Herodotean inscriptions before the publishing of this volume ("The Use(s) of Inscriptions in Herodotus' Histories", *AJPh* 142:2 [2021] 217–257). Allgaier states that Haywood's article came out too late to be taken into account in his work, and Haywood does not cite Allgaier's dissertation so it seems that they arrived at similar conclusions independently. Steiner claims that Herodotus' use of inscriptions affirms that inscribing monuments is linked to Eastern despotism, but Allgaier shows how Herodotus' treatment of inscriptions paints a more complex picture of the creation of inscriptions in *Histories*.

The critique of West's works is in line with other critical commentaries of her work. The epigraphical accuracy of Herodotus is tested in three cases. Allgaier compares these cases and the judgement given by West that they prove Herodotus' mishandling of the sources or even the invention of them as claimed by Detlev Fehling. Allgaier is persuasive in arguing that Herodotus might have used real sources and that – where the source still exists – interpreted it adequately. His interpretation is not comparable to one made by a modern historian, but does not deserve the judgement given by Fehling of how Herodotus' interpretations were all wrong and if he had been to the places he described he could have not made such claims. It might be fruitful to the field of Herodotean research to move on from repeating the critiques of Fehling and West as Allgaier seems to represent the majority of contemporary Herodotean research. Allgaier refers to many newer researchers with dissimilar views on certain interpretations made by Herodotus or interpretations on what the inscriptions were like in cases where they are not extant. It would have been interesting to know Allgaier's take on these more nuanced discussions instead.

The discussion on whether Herodotus meant in his proem that his work itself should be remembered as an inscription seems far-fetched. He uses language that is analogous to inscriptions (ἐξίτηλος) as a reference to the fading of the colour. Herodotus' idea of preserving the memory of the people in his work can be understood without arguing that it belonged to the epigraphical sphere.

There are about 24 inscriptions mentioned in *Histories* of Herodotus and eight in Thucydides' *History*. The precise number depends on the definition of an epigraphic act. They range from direct citations to mentions that someone had something inscribed on a monument or made a commemoration in another form. Allgaier has collected and classified all the inscriptions embedded in the *Histories* and in the *History*. He engages with a discussion on classification and offers his opinion on which ones should be included as inscriptions and where it is hard to classify as such. For

example, there is a case of a statue where it is unclear if a statue was inscribed or merely generally recognized as a statue of Aristeas (Hdt. 4.15.4).

He presents well the information from preserved inscriptions in the relatively rare cases where Herodotus or Thucydides cite a source that still exists in some form. Many chapters consider inscriptions that no longer exist and the last chapter even contains inscriptions that were to be inscribed in the future, but might not have ever been made. Their existence is more important as literary devices than as real world objects. When inscriptions have been at least partially preserved, there is a thorough bibliography on them. In some cases, like the inscriptions of Thermopylae or the ones on the pyramid of Cheops, it is not evident to the reader if the inscriptions are extant. It seems safe to assume that in these cases there are no physical remains of these inscriptions.

In the chapter on Pisistratid inscriptions, Allgaier juxtaposes the traditional view of Thucydides' use of inscriptions as a proof of scientific trustworthiness with the opacity of his method. It is hard to know whether the conclusions Thucydides makes from his material are correct, as he does not let the reader participate in its dissection.

The final case study concerns the meaning of peace treaties in the *History*. Their importance has been disregarded, as they are stylistically different from the other parts of the work. Allgaier claims that their narrative function was to show how the diplomatic process ran its course with its problems and breaches of contract before the full breakout of the Peloponnesian War.

The language used in the book is overall fluent and concise, though there are some minor imprecisions. For example, a frequent use of the term "adduce" when "cite" would suffice – this may be due to the use of German expressions that do not translate accurately into English. The footnotes include vast bibliographies on every subject Allgaier touches upon. He engages in discussions with them, especially with narratological research. Epigraphic research literature from the last 100 to 150 years is comprehensively referred to, but engaged with more occasionally.

Most of the analysis is in the case studies. The epilogues contain summaries and comparisons to *Hellenica* and *Verae Historiae*, which are interesting in their own right. The main focus of the work seems to be on Herodotus. Thucydides is compared to him, but there is also original analysis of the *History* as well. The value of this book is in understanding the narrative meaning of the inscriptions, not in studying the inscriptions themselves. Their inclusion in the narrative highlights certain climatic scenes and their location within the narrative is important in itself.

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