

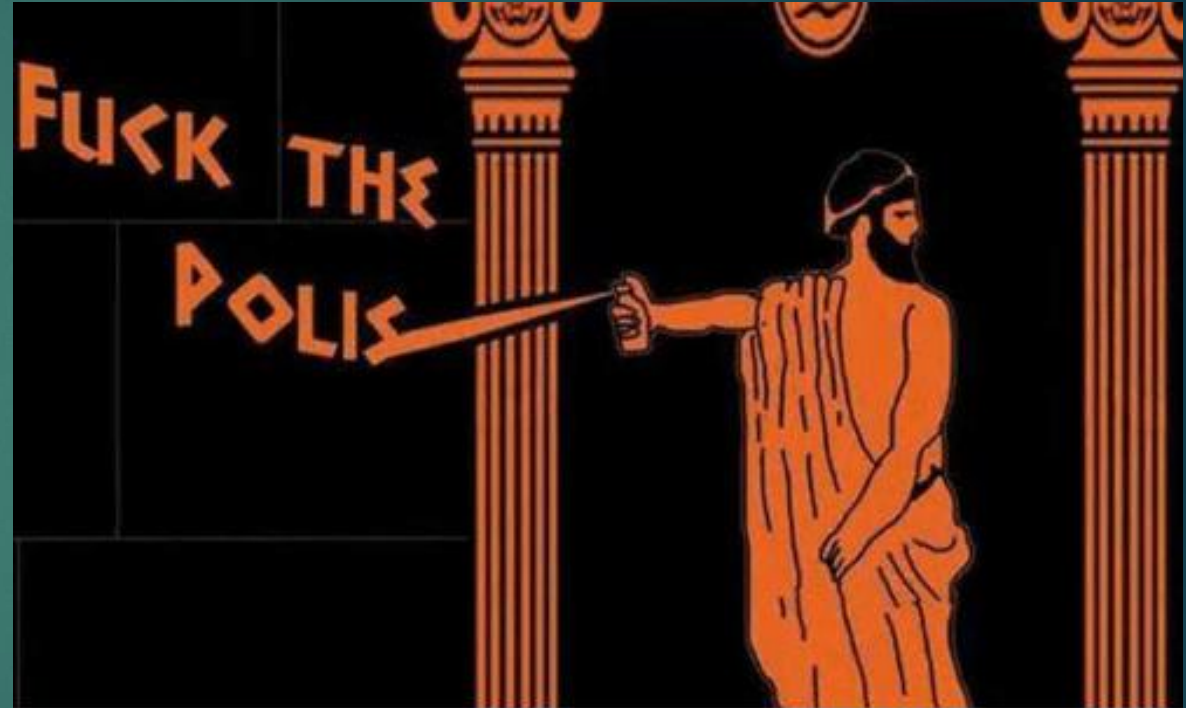


Development of polis Constitutions

HPAH5027/6027 – HERODOTUS AND HIS HISTORIES

The polis in Herodotus

- ▶ The dominance of polis in 6th cent
- ▶ Local histories reinforce polis identity
- ▶ Herodotus focuses on specific poleis, especially Athens
- ▶ Differences between Asia Minor and mainland Greek poleis



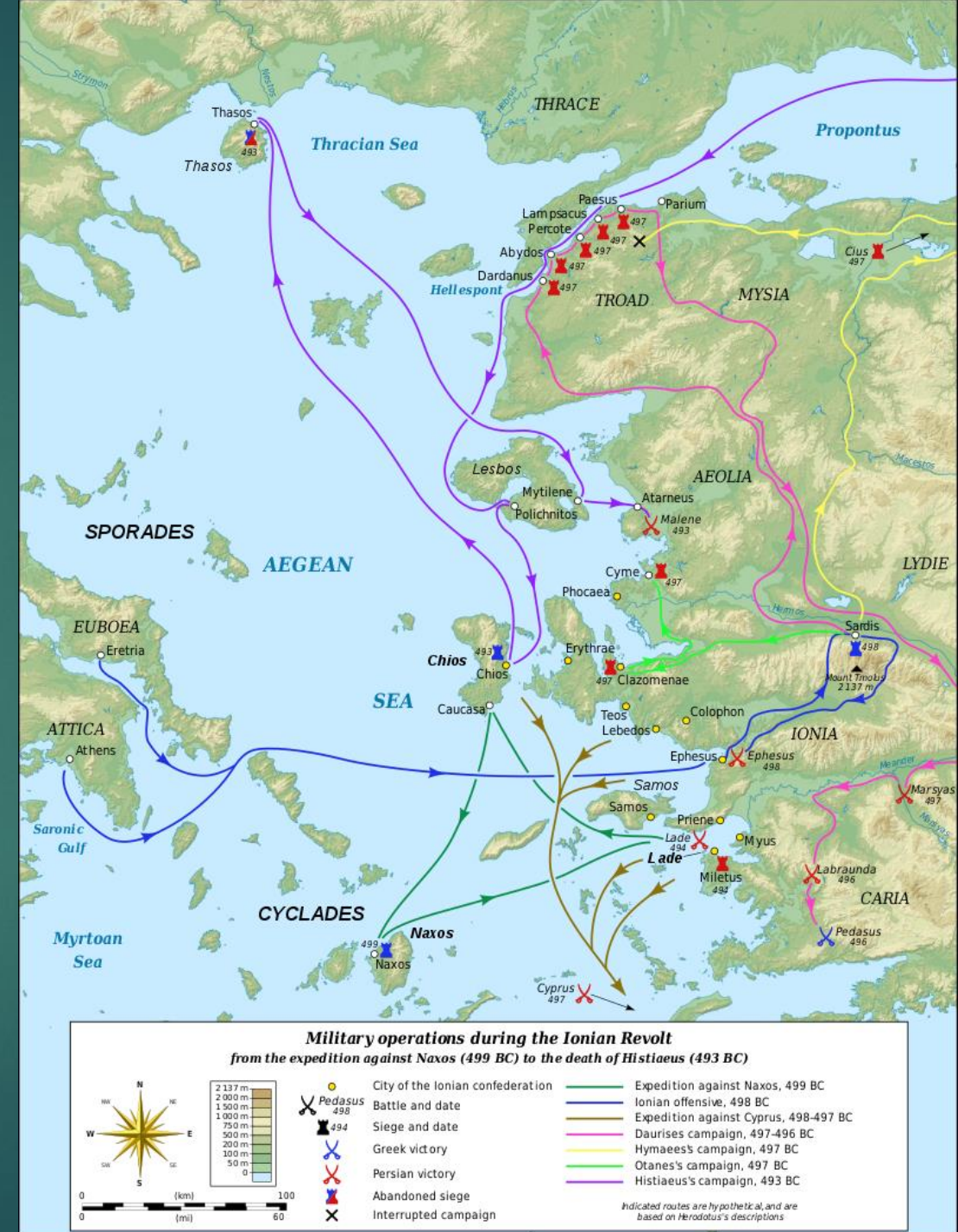
Humans of Ancient Greece

The polis in Herodotus

- ▶ Very few direct democracies like Athens
- ▶ More than one type of democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, etc.
- ▶ Domination of male elites

Ionian Revolt, 499-492

- ▶ Hdt. 5.36-5.40; 5.96-126; 6.16.43
- ▶ Several *poleis* rebel vs local Persian power
- ▶ Hdt presents it as 'hopeless venture'?
- ▶ Causes:
 - ▶ Anti-Persian movement?
 - ▶ Financial drain?
 - ▶ Tyrants...



Ionian tyrants expelled

- ▶ Hdt. 5.37
- ▶ [1] Iatragoras, who had been sent for this very purpose, craftily seized Oliatus of Mylasa son of Ibanollis; Histiaeus of Termera son of Tymnes; Coes son of Erxandrus, to whom Darius gave Mytilene; Aristagoras of Cyme, son of Heraclides; and many others besides. Then Aristagoras revolted openly, devising all he could to harm Darius. [2] First he made pretence of giving up his tyranny and gave Miletus equality of government so that the Milesians might readily join in his revolt. Then he proceeded to do the same things in the rest of Ionia. Some of the tyrants he banished, and as for those tyrants whom he had taken out of the ships that sailed with him against Naxos, he handed them each over to their respective cities, which he wished to please.

The end of the war - Ionians receive democracy

- ▶ Hdt. 6.43:
- ▶ When Mardonius arrived in Ionia in his voyage along the coast of Asia, he did a thing which I here set down for the wonder of those Greeks who will not believe Otanes to have declared his opinion among the Seven that democracy was best for Persia: Mardonius deposed all the Ionian tyrants and set up democracies in their cities. [4] He did this and hurried to the Hellespont. When a great multitude of ships and a great army were assembled, the Persians crossed the Hellespont on by ship and marched through Europe, with Eretria and Athens as their goal.

Athens and development of democracy

- ▶ Hippias, last tyrant of Athens, expelled by 508BCE (by Spartans)
- ▶ Spartan attempts to reinstate tyrants (unsuccessful)
- ▶ Rise of Cleisthenes
- ▶ Introduction of ostracism

Athens and democracy

- ▶ Hdt. 5.66:
- ▶ The two principal holders of power were Cleisthenes an Alcmaeonid, who was reputed to have bribed the Pythian priestess, and Isagoras son of Tisandrus, a man of a notable house but his lineage I cannot say...[2] These men with their factions fell to contending for power, Cleisthenes was getting the worst of it in this dispute and took the *demos* [people] into his party. Presently he divided the Athenians into ten tribes instead of four as formerly.

Athens and democracy

- ▶ Hdt. 5.78:
- ▶ So the Athenians grew in power and proved, not only in one way but in every way, that *isegoria* (equal right to speak] is a good thing. Evidence for this is the fact that while they were under tyrannical rulers, the Athenians were no better in war than any of their neighbours, yet once they got rid of their tyrants, they were by far the best of all. This, then, shows that while they were oppressed, they were, as men working for a master, cowardly, but when they were freed, each one was eager to achieve for himself.

Ethiopia

- ▶ Hdt. 3.20.2;
- ▶ 'It is also said that their [the Ethiopians] laws and customs are different and completely unlike those of anyone else, particularly in respect to their kingship, for they select the tallest of their men who possesses strength to match his size to reign as their king.'
- ▶ Forsythe 2006: 224;
- ▶ Scholars have seen this passage as an example which demonstrates that 'Herodotus was a naïve storyteller who had no deep understanding (or deep interest in) politics'



Was Herodotus a political historian?

Film night – Mon
18th Feb @ 6pm,
Cliff Tucker
Theatre:
300



Further reading

- ▶ Forsdyke, S. 2006, “Herodotus, Political History and Political Thought”, in Dewald and Marincola (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 224-41.
- ▶ Osbourne, R. 2009 (2nd edition), ‘Democracy’. In *ibid*, *Greece in the Making, 1200-479 BC*. London: Routledge, pp. 276-297.