Herodotus in the North? Reflections on a Colossal Cauldron (4.81)

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Nearly 150 years ago J.W. Blakesley, in the introduction to his commentary, protested against anachronistic assumptions about the manner in which Herodotus gathered his material: 'Every one accustomed to the facilities which the present time offers involuntarily attributes to any individual of the same social position with himself similar methods of effecting any given purpose — unconsciously forgetting the entirely different conditions of social existence which an interval of more than 2000 years implies'. In particular, the modern reader tends to underestimate the problems of travel. 'The mere difficulties and dangers of locomotion were enormous. Until the time of Alexander the seas swarmed with pirates, and the land with banditti (Polybius, iii 58, 59). The only countries to which there is any satisfactory evidence of Greek visitors having resorted for the mere purpose of gratifying an intelligent curiosity are Lydia (under the reign of Croesus) and Egypt, with both of which places there existed direct commercial relations of considerable importance. Where this was the case, the interest of the states whose revenue was increased by levying duties upon the merchants would induce them to render the access of foreigners something safer. But on the other hand, the very same interest would tend to confine traffic *to certain definite channels*, and to fetter it by arbitrary rules enforced in the most summary manner ... Admitting our author to have been as naturally inclined to travel as an Englishman of the present day, his means of gratifying this passion must have been very limited'.[1]

We might suppose that travel is substantially easier nowadays than it was in the mid-nineteenth century, and the difference from mid-fifth-century

1 *Herodotus*, with a commentary by the Rev. J.W. Blakesley, I (London 1854), xi-xv. 'Neither in England nor on the Continent does Blakesley receive the attention which despite obsolescence and incompleteness he deserves. He had two important scholarly qualities: independent judgment and the power of putting the right question' (J.E. Powell, *CQ* 29 [1935], 80, n.).

conditions correspondingly greater. But contemporary orthodoxy, backed by the authority of Jacoby's magisterial discussion,[2] continues to support a very generous view of Herodotus' journeys, as may be illustrated from the entry in the latest edition of the *OCD* (J.P.A. Gould): 'He writes of enquiries made in the northern Aegean, in southern Italy, round the shores of the Black Sea, in Egypt (where he travelled as far up the Nile as Elephantine: 2.29), at Dodona in NW Greece, and at Cyrene in Libya; of things seen on the Dnieper in southern Russia;[3] in Babylon on the Euphrates; at Tyre in Lebanon; of talking to Carthaginians and to the inhabitants of Delphi'.

Herodotus' work conveys so powerful a sense that an understanding of the forces controlling events requires some acquaintance with cultures other than one's own that we should feel cheated if it could be shown that he had seen only the places with which the *Suda* entry associates him, Halicarnassus, Samos and Thurii. Reconstructing his itinerary is a long outdated pastime, but there are dangers in an over-generous estimate of his range. In a strange land, ignorant of the language and customs, and without the maps and guide books which allow the modern tourist to head briskly for his objectives, Herodotus (or any other ancient traveller) would initially have been very dependent on Greeks familiar with the country. If he could not plan for a period of extended residence, how much in the course of a short visit might he have learned that he could not have discovered from conversations with merchants and mercenaries in Samos or Athens[4] or with temple personnel and others who made a living from the tourist trade at Delphi? Anyone concerned with the reliability of his information (and hardly any aspect of Herodotus' work can be discussed without regard to this) needs to decide how far it is legitimate to say 'Herodotus was there; he should know'. Polybius regarded Byzantium as lying somewhat outside those parts of the world generally visited (4.38.11): παρὰ τοῖς πλείστοις ἀγνοεῖσθαι συνέβαινε τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὴν εὐφυίαν τοῦ τόπου διὰ τὸ μικρὸν ἔξω κεῖσθαι τῶν

2 *RE Supplbd.* 2, 247-80.

3 Nowadays the Ukraine.

4 A sojourn in Athens has been generally regarded as beyond question (see further M. Ostwald, 'Herodotus and Athens', *ICS* 16 [1991], 137-48), even though it does not figure in the *Suda* entry; see however A.J. Podlecki, 'Herodotus in Athens?' in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory: Studies Presented to F. Schachermeyr* (Berlin 1977), 246-65.

ἐπισκοπουμένων μερῶν τῆς οἰκουμένης.[5] Did Herodotus really visit the North Pontic coast?

Rostovtzeff, who gave more thought to Greek/Scythian contacts than any scholar before or since, evidently believed there was room for doubt. Stressing the centrality of Olbia for Herodotus' account of Scythia, he does not waste time discussing whether the historian had actually been there. 'Herodot interessiert sich gar nicht speziell für die griechischen, ionischen Kolonien am Ufer des Schwarzen Meeres. Ihn zieht hauptsächlich das Skythenreich an, und er orientiert sich dabei von der Stadt Olbia aus, die er vielleicht selbst besucht hat'.[6] Note 'vielleicht'; his caution might have been expected to inspire more interest. The publication of the chapters from the second part of *Skifiya i Bospor*, abandoned in Petrograd in 1918 and discovered in 1986, suggests that he thought he had already addressed the question directly. 'Die weiter oben behandelte Frage, ob Herodot wenigstens ein kleines Stück Skythien aus eigener Anschauung kannte oder ob er vorwiegend aus den Berichten seiner Vorgänger schöpfte, hat für uns keine entscheidende Bedeutung. Wichtiger ist, daß ein beträchtlicher Teil seiner Darstellung Skythiens zweifellos auf die olbischen Griechen zurückgeht, die über jenes Skythien, das ihnen am nächsten lag und das sie direkt interessierte, natürlich nicht schlecht informiert waren'.[7] From his sober observations on the difficulties of using Herodotus' account we may see why he regarded the matter as of peripheral importance. 'Die teils mechanische, teils organische Überarbeitung dieser Nachrichten durch Herodot oder seine Vorgänger, deren Horizont viel weiter war als der enge Gesichtskreis der olbischen Griechen, bereitet unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten, wenn man diese Beobachtungen aus all dem herauszuschälen versucht, was seines exotischen, märchenhaften und poetischen Charakters wegen für die Logographen selber wie auch für ihre Leser besonders wertvoll war. Für uns haben diese letzteren, weder an eine bestimmte Nationalität noch an einen bestimmten Zeitpunkt gebundenen, Elemente eine sehr viel geringere Bedeutung als die engen, jedoch realen Beobachtungen der Olbier'. Rostovtzeff

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5 He seems not to have been there himself; see further F.W. Walbank, 'Polybius on the Pontus and the Bosphorus (iv.39-42)', *Studies Presented to David M. Robinson* I (Saint Louis, Missouri 1951), 469-79.

6 *Skythien und der Bosporus* 1 (Berlin 1931), 20 (*Skifiya i Bospor* [Leningrad 1925], 18).

7 M. Rostowzew, *Skythien und der Bosporus, Band ii. Wiederentdeckte Kapitel und Verwandtes*, übersetzt u. herausgegeben von Heinz Heinen in Verbindung mit G.M. Bongard-Levin u. Ju.G. Vinogradov (*Historia Einzelschriften* 83 [Stuttgart 1993], 31).

took it for granted that Herodotus could draw on the experience of those who knew the area well without going there himself, and was, we may suspect, not optimistic about the intellectual value of a brief visit.

Rostovzeff's intensive use of Herodotus left him in two minds on this point. In view of his general confidence in Herodotus' reliability he must have believed that the question could be discussed without implying doubts about his veracity. Certainly the case is very different from the problems raised by Herodotus' frequent references to first-hand observation and enquiry in his account of Egypt,[8] and in fact at an early stage he rather discourages us from supposing that he had himself visited Scythia.

The Scythians enjoy a place of honour in Herodotus' work by reason of their success in thwarting Persian expansionism. The ground has been carefully prepared. Herodotus presents Darius' campaign as retaliation for the Scythian invasion of Western Asia a century earlier (4.1.2; 118f.; 7.20.2).[9] An act of sacrilege committed in the course of that incursion had, Herodotus believed, brought terrible consequences upon the offenders' descendants (1.105.4): τοῖσι δὲ τῶν Σκυθέων συλήσασι τὸ ἱρὸν τὸ ἐν Ἀσκάλωνι καὶ τοῖσι τούτων αἰεὶ ἐκγόνοισι ἐνέσκηψε ἡ θεὸς θήλειαν νοῦσον· ὥστε ἅμα λέγουσί τε οἱ Σκύθαι διὰ τοῦτό σφεας νοσέειν, καὶ ὁρᾶν παρ' ἑωυτοῖσι τοὺς ἀπικνεομένους ἐς τὴν Σκυθικὴν χώρην ὡς διακέαται, τοὺς καλέουσι 'ἐναρέας' οἱ Σκύθαι.[10] We learn more about the Enarees later (4.67), where the name is explained by ἀνδρόγυνοι.[11] This is not the place to discuss whether they were the victims of an inherited or endemic degenerative condition or transvestite shamans.[12] What should be noted is the manner in

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8 See further J. Marincola, 'Herodotean Narrative and the Narrator's Presence', *Arethusa* 20 (1987), 121-37.

9 The motivation is highly characteristic of Herodotus, but can hardly be relevant to Darius' real aims, which like much else about this campaign are mysterious; see further J.R. Gardiner-Garden, 'Dareios' Scythian Expedition and its Aftermath', *Klio* 69 (1987), 326-50.

10 Rosén's edition (Leipzig 1987).

11 The word is not attested earlier, but is unlikely to have been Herodotus' invention. We might wonder whether there is more than meets the eye to Eteocles' ἀνὴρ γυνή τε χὠ τι τῶν μεταίχμιον (A. *Sept.*197): 'he stresses his threat by embracing ... an unimaginable category in between' (Hutchinson ad loc.), but in Tiresias' hometown an intersex ought to be more easily imaginable than elsewhere.

12 [Longinus] 28.4 quotes the first sentence to illustrate the effectiveness of periphrasis; he must have had a definite idea what was meant by θήλεια νοῦσος, and it is frustrating that he does not elaborate. Meuli's famous 'Scythica' (*Hermes* 70 [1935], 121-78, esp. 127-37) (= *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 [Basel and

which Herodotus rules out any suggestion that he had himself had an opportunity to observe those thus afflicted. Admittedly, some have doubted the soundness of the sentence beginning ὥστε. We might expect the independent observations of visitors to Scythia to be presented as partial confirmation of what the Scythians themselves say, not to form part of their statement.[13] But if the text is indeed unsound, it was corrupted early; two papyri (*P.Oxy.*18 [third century], 1244 [early second century]) confirm the paradosis.[14] At all events, unless the text is more seriously corrupt than anyone appears to have supposed, Herodotus clearly distances himself somewhat from those who have visited the region. The point should be borne in mind as we come to Book 4.

Herodotus was certainly in no hurry to suggest that his account of the North Pontic region rested on first-hand observation and enquiry. 'There is but one passage in the fourth book', wrote R.W. Macan, 'and not any elsewhere, which is at all difficult to explain on the supposition that

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Stuttgart 1975], 817-79, esp. 824-34) has generally been thought to have shown the Enarees to be shamans; see also W.R. Halliday, 'A Note on the θήλεα νοῦσος of the Scythians', *ABSA* 17 (1910-11), 95-102; D. Margreth, *Skythische Schamanen? Die Nachrichten über Enarees-Anarieis bei Herodot und Hippokrates* (Schiffhausen 1993); T. Taylor, *The Prehistory of Sex*: *Four Million Years of Human Sexual Culture* (London 1996), 210-4; on transvestite/transgendered shamans more generally see László Kürti, 'Eroticism, Sexuality and Gender Reversal in Hungarian Culture' and M.M. Balzer, 'Sacred Genders in Siberia: Shamans, Bear Festivals and Androgyny' in S.P. Ramet (ed.), *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London 1996), 148-63 (esp. 154-7), 164-82. But shamanizing as normally observed makes heavy demands on the practitioner, inconsistent with the enfeebled condition which Hippocrates *(AWP* 22) attempts to explain. It may be better to postulate a genetic abnormality: see further E. Lieber, 'The Hippocratic "Airs, Waters, Places" on cross-dressing eunuchs: "natural" yet also "divine"', in R. Wittern and P. Pellgrin (eds.), *Hippokratische Medizin und antike Philosophie* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1996), 451-76; S. West, 'Hippocrates' Scythian Sketches', *Eirene* 1999 (forthcoming).

13 Madvig (*Adversaria Critica* 3 [Copenhagen 1884], 21 n.) quotes with approval Pingel's conjecture καὶ ὁρᾶν πάρεστι τοῖσι ἀπικνεομένοισι. Herbert Richards ('Notes on Herodotus, Books i-iii', *CR* 19 [1905], 290-3), advancing on this, suggests καὶ ὁρᾶν πάρα (or πάρεστιν or παρέχει) αὐτοῖσι τοῖσι ἀπικνεομένοισι, and this (with πάρεστι) is adopted by Legrand. J.E. Powell in his translation (2. [Oxford 1949], 689) adopts Pingel's emendation, but obelizes ὥστε ... νοσέειν.

14 *P.Oxy.* 1244 seems to have omitted σφεας; though neither fragment is free from lacunae, there is not much scope for any further deviation.

Herodotus stayed his voyage at Byzantion. The description of Exampaios, and of the krater there (4.81), might seem hardly consistent with candour and honesty, if Herodotus had not been at least as far as Borysthenes (Olbia)'.[15]

This passage comes almost at the end of his Scythian ethnography. Herodotus confesses to uncertainty about population figures; according to some accounts (provenance unspecified) the Scythians were very many, according to others, true Scythians were very few (81.1).[16] He was invited to draw his own conclusions from an enormous bronze vessel, six times as large as a krater dedicated by Pausanias at the Bosporus, six fingers in thickness and holding 600 amphoreis (i.e. roughly 10 cms. thick, with a capacity of over 20,000 litres). This was to be found at a place called Exampaeus, previously mentioned (52.3), between the Borysthens (Dnieper) and the Hypanis (Bug/Sinyukha),[17] and, according to local report, had been made from the material collected when their ruler Ariantas, wishing to know the number of his people, ordered every Scythian to bring an arrowhead, and then decided to use this vast collection for a memorial to be dedicated there.

This artefact must support the higher estimate of numbers, though Herodotus, himself weak in computation,[18] cannot have envisaged anyone attempting appropriate calculations.[19] 'Such dimensions would make it

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15 *Herodotus, the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books* I (London 1895), xcvi.

16 Hereafter, where no book numbers are given in references to Herodotus, Book 4 is meant. ὡς Σκύθας εἶναι: Herodotus rather favours this limitative use of the infinitive: see further Goodwin, *GMT* §782. The different estimates reflect a problem of terminology. Ordinary Greek usage could designate as Scythian any northern barbarian from the Eurasian steppe, but Herodotus aspires to greater precision, and, though he is not entirely consistent, seems to wish to restrict the term to the group who claimed hegemony, those whom he calls Royal Scyths. We are not free of this problem; modern attempts to co-ordinate archaeological discovery with the information offered by ancient writers are bedevilled by similar confusion. See further H. Kothe, 'Der Skythenbegriff bei Herodot', *Klio* 51 (1969), 15-88.

17 See below n. 30.

18 'Dem das Rechnen stets Schwierigkeiten gemacht hat', Jacoby, op.cit. (n. 2) 248; cf. W. Aly, *Volksmärchen, Sage u. Novelle bei Herodot u. seinen Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen 1921), 74.

19 The correct figure 'should have been between 3 and 13 million people, which is simply incredible': see K.K. Marchenko and J.G. Vinogradov, *Antiquity* 63 (1989), 809.

perfectly useless' briskly observed E.H. Minns.[20] A Greek visitor could easily measure its thickness, but its capacity must be a matter of guesswork. If the locals (οἱ ἐπιχώριοι) who related the story of its origins also knew how much liquid was needed to fill it, they would not have expressed the answer in terms easily convertible into Greek metrology: '*x* bucketfuls', where *x* involves some rhetorical exaggeration, expressive of the tedium of the task, and the capacity of the bucket is somewhat uncertain, leaves plenty of scope for imprecision. Herodotus apparently saw no difficulty in principle about such a monstrous vessel; if his MSS are to be trusted he believed that the silver mixing bowl given to Delphi by Croesus and used at the Theophania[21] likewise held 600 amphoreis (1.51.2).[22] We may feel that he did not understand the implications of the figures he gives,[23] but this is not an argument against the existence, at a site four days' journey upriver from Olbia, of an impressively large bronze vessel which local tradition connected with a census.

There is no reason why Herodotus should not have seen this remarkable artefact; but does he actually claim to have done so? I paraphrased the crucial sentence, where the MSS are divided (4.81.2). The majority give

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20 *Scythians and Greeks. A Survey of Ancient History and Archaeology on the North Coast of the Euxine from the Danube to the Caucasus* (Cambridge 1913), 80.

21 Or Theoxenia? See Pfister, *RE* 5Aii s.v. Theoxenia 2257; Asheri ad loc.

22 J.G. Griffith, 'Two Passages in Herodotus and the Bronze Crater from the Royal Tomb at Vix-sur-Seine', *Festinat Senex: Essays in Greek and Latin Literature and Archaeology* (Oxford 1988), 5-24 argued that the figure given for the Delphic *crater* was technologically absurd (and similarly the capacity of 300 amphoreis given for the bronze *crater* which the Spartans had made with a view to presentation to Croesus [1.70.1]). He held that these figures were corrupt, and rather favoured tenfold reduction (though advocating obelization as an editor's best course). He did not discuss the Exampaeus cauldron, nor the (allegedly) similarly capacious silver vessel which, according to Kallixeinos (*FGrH* 627F2), was hauled by 600 men in the Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus, see further E.E. Rice, *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (Oxford 1983), 74. Ought we to compare the use of *sescenti* to indicate an indefinitely large number?

23 Fehling expresses the matters in terms which we can visualize (*Herodotus and his 'Sources': Citation, Invention and Narrative Art* [Leeds 1989], 223): 'Six hundred *amphorae* is about twenty-five cubic metres, or approximately the volume of a room with a floor area of nine square metres and a ceiling of normal height; and the weight of such a vessel has been estimated at over twenty metric tons'.

τοσόνδε μέντοι ἀπέφαινόν μοι ἐς ὄψιν· ἔστι μεταξὺ κτλ., and this reading is adopted by most modern editors[24] (and correspondingly reflected in translations); ἐς ὄψιν thus serves to emphasise the reality claim. The imperfect is a little surprising, but few have been convinced by Macan's argument (ad loc.) that it marks an action 'projected but not performed or accomplished ... Herodotus does not clearly say that he saw the krater at Exampaios. He only says: "They were for showing" — "offered to show me". The point of his assertion is not his autopsy, but their argument'.[25] Macan himself was clearly somewhat uneasy about his interpretation: 'If it be argued that the natural way of understanding this passage is the way in which it has been generally understood, I admit so much. But the question is whether the view here advanced is not tenable as a grammatical and logical exposition of the passage, and materially coherent with the general evidence in regard to Herodotus' visit to the Pontos. If the passage implies a visit to Exampaios, which yet is not directly asserted, it raises the question of Herodotus' honesty and character as a historian: but if it is conceivable that he might have penned this passage without having been to Exampaios, and without wishing it to be supposed that he had been to Exampaios, *cadit quaestio*'.

Rosén, however, prefers the reading of *a*, the Florentine family (= ABC), which gives ὡς before ἔστι and thus requires a different punctuation: τοσόνδε μέντοι ἀπέφαινόν μοι ἐς ὄψιν, ὡς ἔστι μεταξὺ κτλ.[26] I take this to mean 'they indicated this much to me by way of illustration'.[27] The imperfect ἀπέφαινον thus matches ἔλεγον (81.4) and ἤκουον (81.6); nobody showed, or proposed to show, an object, but people told Herodotus about it and invited him to draw his own conclusions. It may be significant that the subject is not expressed; we should not extract one from οἱ ἐπιχώριοι

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24 Thus Stein, Hude, Legrand.

25 W.J. Woodhouse (*Herodotus iv, chapters 1-144*, University Tutorial Series, [London, n.d.], ad loc.) advocates this interpretation: 'Translate, "offered to show me", of projected action. It is not necessary to conclude that Herodotus had visited Exampaeus and seen the bowl'. Carolyn Dewald appears sympathetic to this interpretation ('Reading the World: The Interpretation of Objects in Herodotus' *Histories*' in R.M. Rosen and J. Farrell [eds.], *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald* [Ann Arbor 1993], 55-70 [56 n. 1]).

26 So van Groningen (*Herodotus' Historien*, Leiden 1945), but his edition has not enjoyed a wide enough currency to have much influence. Silvio Medaglia, the editor of the Fondazione Lorenzo Valla edition (1993) follows Rosén, though the translator appears to prefer the more familiar form of the text; unfortunately Corcella does not discuss this textual problem in his commentary.

27 Cf. perhaps Anaxag. F21a ὄψις τῶν ἀδήλων τὰ φαινόμενα.

(81.4). Herodotus' source(s), more likely Greek traders from Olbia than Scythians, might be supposed to have reported what was said locally. We might guess that Herodotus owed to his informant the comparison with Pausanias' dedication; many have found it odd that Herodotus did not simply compare the reputedly equally capacious vessel with which Croesus presented Delphi (1.51.2),[28] but in taking over a description it is natural to include whatever analogies or parallels one's source has used if they will serve the purpose rather than think of alternatives.

This cauldron was clearly important, even if its reported dimensions are a wild guess, the conversion into figures (perhaps over-literal) of an impression that it was far larger than a well known Hellenic *Sehenswürdigkeit* at the Bosporus. When Herodotus earlier mentioned Exampaeus (52.3) he also gave its Greek name, Ἱραὶ ὁδοί, and located this evidently sacred site at the source of a salt spring bearing the same name,[29] four days' journey up the Hypanis,[30] on the border between the agricultural Scythians and the (likewise agricultural) Alizones. A relatively sedentary population provides a more suitable environment than a nomad encampment for the creation of what was clearly a massive piece of metalwork, well beyond the size of the cauldrons essential for nomadic catering (cf. 61.1)[31] and not easily

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28 See above. Jacoby (op.cit. [n. 2], 256f.) regarded this as evidence that Herodotus had visited Scythia before he got to know Delphi, the *Skythikos logos* being in his view essentially a lecture on Scythia and its people expanded occasionally by notes added after Herodotus became acquainted with mainland Greece.

29 Evidently an affluent impregnated with salt from the steppe, but not precisely identifiable: see further Minns, op.cit. (n. 20), 28; W.K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography: Part IV (Passes)* (Berkeley 1982), 243-5; Herodotus no doubt exaggerates its effects. Some scholars favour a different explanation, that the salty spring is a hypothesis to account for the brackishness of the North Pontic rivers near their mouths, but this seems much less likely.

30 The Hypanis is the Bug south of its confluence with the Sinyukha, but northward the course of the Hypanis as described by ancient sources better suits the Sinyukha than the Bug. See further F. Bosi, 'Il re, la caldaia e le frecce (Herod.iv,81)', *Mnemosynum: studi in onore di Alfredo Ghiselli* (Bologna 1989), 65-74 (66); B.A. Rubakov, *Gerodotova Skifiya* (Moscow 1979), 31-6.

31 Herodotus must be wrong in supposing that, because of the shortage of firewood, bones were *regularly* used as fuel for cooking; there cannot have been any shortage of dung, which could be dried and burnt. An interesting comparison of the calorific qualities of various kinds of dried dung is given by the Lazarist traveller, Evariste-Régis Huc, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, 1844-1846* (trans. William Hazlitt [1851], New York 1987), 2. 104f.; according

transported far from the place of its manufacture. We should probably envisage a vessel cast in several pieces riveted together.[32] In antiquity the Scythians had a high reputation as metallurgists;[33] we should not assume that Greek craftsmen would have to be employed.[34]

Ariantas is not mentioned elsewhere;[35] Herodotus clearly supposed that he exercised authority over all the Scythians, not just a group, and βασιλεύς (81.5) must here be translated 'king'. It is one of the weaknesses of Herodotus' ethnography that he nowhere describes the political organization of Scythia, the division of the territory into νομοί being introduced at 62.1 as if some account of the system had already been given. In fact, in Herodotus' day, as in that of Darius, the peoples of this area formed a loose tribal confederation, a situation reflected by, e.g., the threefold division indicated at 120.2-3, 136.1, οἱ Σκυθέων βασιλέες (128.1; 131.1), and in Thucydides' comment on Scythian disunity (2.97.6). But though in many contexts 'chieftain' or 'noble' would be a more appropriate translation,[36] here unified rule over an immensely large population is indicated, and 'king' will not mislead us.[37]

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to his account, that of goats and sheep produces the most intense heat and could be used for metal-working.

32 The Russian commentary (A.I. Dovatur, D.P. Kallistov, I.A. Shishova, *Narody nashej strany v 'istorii' Gerodota. Teksty, perevod, komentarij*, Moscow 1982) offers an interesting note on the importance of immense copper cauldrons in the traditional lifestyle of Ossete villages; these vessels were made from separate pieces so skilfully riveted together that the joins are hard to detect.

33 See Hellanicus *FGrH* 4F189, with Jacoby's commentary; Rostowzew, *Skythien u. der Bosporus* 1. 22f.

34 We are liable to underestimate the level of achievement to be found among the smiths of nomad communities; see further S. Vainshtein, *Nomads of South Siberia: The Pastoral Economies of Tuva* (ed. with an introduction by Caroline Humphrey, translated by M. Colenso, Cambridge 1980), 17, 198-207.

35 His name, like most Scythian names, looks Iranian ('gehört zu air. *airya*' L. Zgusta, *Die Personennamen griechischer Städte der nördlichen Schwarzmeerküste* [Prague 1955], 260).

36 The connotations of 'prince' are vague enough to avoid the problems raised already by the Homeric use of βασιλεύς, but the word does not seem popular with translators.

37 The point should be borne in mind with reference to Hartog's stimulating discussion of Herodotus' representation of Scythian kingship, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1988), 112-72. In general, more attention needs to be paid to the terminological difficulties which ancient writers (not

We can only guess when Herodotus supposed this enforced census took place. We might think it a pity that tradition failed to preserve the total: did Herodotus infer that the Scythians lacked the skill to count so high? The cauldron might be said to provide an indication of Scythian strength, rather as the great barrows of Arzhan, Aul Uls'skii and Alexandropol imply a high level of resources and organizational competence; but we feel frustrated for lack of more specific detail. We are perhaps meant to infer that Ariantas (like King David)[38] wished to discover the size of his fighting force; a census as the basis for taxation[39] seems less likely. We may see a rather attractive symbolism in the individual arrowheads being melted down and united in a great vessel dedicated at a sacred site where various trade routes met, a peaceable illustration of Scythian strength.[40]

We have no reason to think that Herodotus was not honestly reporting what he was told; we need not doubt that at a site with sacred associations, four days upriver from Olbia and well known to Greek traders, there was a monumental cauldron believed to embody the material collected in the course of a census. Scythia did not offer many *Sehenswürdigkeiten*; this remarkable vessel had made an impression on Greek travellers, and deserved

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only Greeks) faced in describing forms of socio-political organization which did not fit their conventional classifications; for an Assyrian example see R. Rollinger, *ZAss* 89 (1999), 115-39, esp. 122.

38 2 *Samuel* 24, 1 *Chron.* 21; Joab, who is made responsible for carrying out the count of fighting men, admirably plays the Herodotean role of the wise adviser. It is mysterious why the measure is regarded as dreadfully wrong, calling for the collective punishment of the whole nation; see further H.J. Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis* (Gütersloh 1994), 518-22. Recollections of this story might predispose us to assume a tabu against the practice, but there seems to be no other evidence that it was regarded as intrinsically objectionable. M.W. Christ ('Herodotean Kings and Historical Enquiry' *CA* 13 [1994], 167-202, esp. 172f.) takes a perhaps unduly severe view of Ariantas' measure.

39 As with Servius Tullius' census (D.H. *Ant.Rom.* 4.15.4-5). J.G.F. Hind (*Archaeological Reports for 1983-84*, 73) has suggested a possible connection with the controversial arrow-currency (on which see C. Preda, 'Prämonetäre Zahlungsmittel in Form von Pfeilspitzen an der West- u. Nordküste des Schwarzen Meeres', *Klio* 73 [1991], 20-27). It is interesting that though we think of arrows and the reflex bow as the typical Scythian weapons, it is a battle-axe (σάγαρις) which represents this aspect of Scythian life in the gifts fallen from heaven in the (allegedly) Scythian legend of their origins (5.3).

40 To some extent comparable with Lysistrata's metaphor drawn from wool-working (Ar. *Lys.* 567-86).

mention,[41] as did what was taken to be Herakles' footprint, described in the following chapter (82).

This tangible expression of Scythian numbers is shortly matched by the mounds of stones allegedly marking the passage of Darius' army over the River Artescus (92). This may seem too neat; but though Herodotus *might* of course be manipulating a type of story widely told, there is nothing intrinsically unlikely in supposing that local tradition had come to associate some artificial mounds (tumuli?) with Darius' route.[42] Herodotus does not actually say that Darius was numbering his army,[43] and we are free to suppose that he imagined that the king simply intended (like Ariantas) to leave a memorial.[44]

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41 I find a little disturbing the treatment which this chapter receives from Stephen Greenblatt (*Marvelous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World* [Oxford 1991], 125f.): 'The bowl, a poetic image cleverly disguised as a piece of hard historical evidence, is part of a strategy of authentication: the reader is invited to accept Herodotus' view (invited in this case to register woolly vagueness as impressive cliometrical precision) because Herodotus himself witnessed the truth, or rather because the historian has deduced the truth from the cultural artifact and has initiated the reader into his deductive method ... The Scythian bowl, the 'memorial' of the impermanent and elusive, utterly unreliable and yet tantalizingly concrete, the talisman of eyewitness and the visible trace of an old story, is in effect an emblem of historiographical curiosity within the large landscape of Herodotus' own text'. This appears to attribute to Herodotus the strategy appropriate to a dramatist or novelist. (Somewhat similarly Dewald, op.cit. [n. 25]).

42 For similar traditions relating to the campaign of Ivan the Terrible against Kazan see Maureen Perrie, *The Image of Ivan the Terrible in Russian Folklore* (Cambridge 1987), 68f. Ivan is also credited with flogging the Volga; we are reminded of Xerxes at the Hellespont (7.35.1-2).

43 A clearly superfluous exercise at this point, since we have just been told of the *stelae* on which he left a record of his troops (87.1). We should not read back into this passage an anticipation of the crude count of his forces attributed to Xerxes (7.59f.). We might, however, compare the pyramid which Cheops' daughter was able to construct from the stones contributed by her clients during her period of service as a prostitute (2.126).

44 Rather as Xenophon's company were moved to mark their arrival in sight of the Black Sea with the erection of cairns (*An.* 4.7.25). This form of commemoration, embodying an immense total made up of small contributions, cannot be said to have altogether lost its appeal. In Gdansk, in December 1970, at an unofficial ceremony marking the anniversay of the authorities' brutal response to a massive workers' protest, Lech Walesa ended his appeal to the crowd with a plea that everyone should come back next year, carrying a stone to build a

The cauldron at Exampaeus is an important element in the case raised against Herodotus' veracity by O.K. Armayor;[45] its reality is defended by W.K. Pritchett.[46] It will not bear such weight. Its dimensions cannot be taken literally; any Greek account of its capacity could only be a guess. It is not clear that Herodotus claimed to have seen it; there is no reason why he should not have heard about it, and more generally about Exampaeus, elsewhere.

Armayor also attached importance to a sentence in Herodotus' account of the dimensions of the Black Sea, Bosporus, and Hellespont (86.4): ὁ μέν νυν Πόντος οὗτος καὶ Βόσπορός τε καὶ Ἑλλήσποντος οὕτω τέ μοι μεμετρέαται καὶ κατὰ τὰ εἰρημένα πεφύκασι. Herodotus' dimensions for the Black Sea are far too high, the error being much greater for the length (twice what it should be) than for the breadth. The crucial word here is μοι;[47] it makes a considerable difference how much weight it is supposed to carry. Armayor compares Herodotus' claim to have measured the pyramids (2.127.1): ταῦτα γὰρ ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐμετρήσαμεν. There the appeal to first-hand observation is stressed. Here surely the emphasis rather falls on οὕτω.[48] The note (on 86.1) in How and Wells (who did not wish to deny Herodotus a journey to the North Pontic region) represents what I believe to be the majority view: 'H. does not mean that he is giving the results of his own voyage; he is calculating from a seaman's περίπλους'.[49] The element of personal involvement may thus be supposed to consist in the conversion of distances expressed in terms of the time required to cover them, the old system which we find in the *Odyssey*,[50] to a system more in keeping with contemporary

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monument to the martyrs: see further T. Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution* (London 1983), 33f.

45 'Did Herodotus ever go to the Black Sea?' *HSCPh* 82 (1978), 45-61; see also D. Fehling, *Herodotus and his 'Sources': Citation, Invention and Narrative Art* (Leeds 1989), 223.

46 Op.cit. (n. 29), 242-55; *The Liar School of Herodotos* (Amsterdam 1993), 132-8.

47 Deleted by Powell (op.cit. [n. 13], 703) though he certainly believed in Herodotus' northern travels.

48 See also Marincola, op.cit. (n. 8), 123 n. 5.

49 Similarly Macan ad loc: 'The expression does not in any way carry with it the inference that Hdt. had performed the voyage; it only asserts that he has made a calculation based on certain data which he indicates'; so too Walbank, op.cit. (n. 5), 474 n. 24.

50 10.81; 12.329, 447f. We have an excellent example of what we might expect to find in a hexametric *Periplous/Kataplous* in the latter part of the description of the Island of Goats (9.136-41); cf. also Circe's advice to Odysseus (12.37-141).

geographical thought. Herodotus likes such conversions: compare his (incorrect) calculation of the years covered by 341 reigns (2.142.2) (though his own history of pharaonic Egypt should have warned him not to equate a reign with a generation).[51] We might also suspect that some manipulation of his data was required to get a figure for the length of the Pontus; it would have been quite extraordinary to sail directly from the mouth of the Pontus to the Phasis instead of making a coastal voyage. Though the direct north-south route appears to have come into regular use only in the first half of the fourth century, it must have been tried earlier.[52] Herodotus' errors have no evidential value for or against a journey north of Byzantium.

I hardly imagine that his reference to Darius' forts on the banks of the Oaros, east of the Don, τῶν ἔτι ἐς ἐμὲ τὰ ἐρίπια σόα ἦν (4.124.1), need be discussed in this connection; Jacoby has established that the claim that something exists or happens μέχρι ἐμεῦ, ἐς ἐμέ etc. 'sagt über Autopsie gar nichts aus'.[53] Nor should we assume that he must have gone to Olbia to talk with Tymnes, the Scythian king's *epitropos* (76.6);[54] it is perhaps significant that he does not attempt to explain what ἐπίτροπος means in this context, but we may suspect that Ariapeithes' agent exercised a political function.[55]

This type of literature, 'das altionische Lehrgedicht', has been rather neglected, though Hesiod surely borrowed from the navigational repertoire, *Op.* 648 (δείξω δή τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης). Cf. Apollo's claim (Hdt. 1.47.3): οἶδα δ' ἐγὼ ψάμμου τ' ἀριθμὸν καὶ μέτρα θαλάσσης. See further M.P. Nilsson, 'Κατάπλοι (Beiträge zum Schiffskataloge u. zu der altionischen nautischen Literatur)', *RhM* 60 (1905), 161-89 (= *Opuscula Selecta* 2 [Lund 1952], 761-91); F. Gisenger, *RE* 37, 841-50 s.v. Periplus.

51 Cf. also his conversion of 70 years into days (1.32.2, 3), revealing an inadequate grip on the calendar. It is hazardous to mention *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* in discussing Herodotus; but it is worth noting that a studied display of measurements and calculation is a conspicuous feature of that author's travel writing; the parade of scientific objectivity enhances the credibility of the vegetable lamb and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders; see further Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The 'Travels' of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia 1997), 135.

52 See further C. Danoff, *RE Supplbd.* 9, Pontos Euxeinos 1046, 1141.

53 Op.cit. (n. 2), 249.

54 The name is well attested in Caria.

55 On Olbia as a Scythian protectorate see J.G. Vinogradov and S.G. Kryzickij, *Olbia: eine altgriechische Stadt im nordwestlichen Schwarzmeerraum* (Leiden 1995), 132-4.

Herodotus' reputation as an accurate observer certainly does not suffer if he is no longer credited with a journey to Olbia and its hinterland. His description of the climate (28), suggesting the Arctic Circle rather than the Ukraine, rather argues against first-hand experience, and certainly rules out a prolonged stay. Away from the resort strip the reality was, as Aristotle knew (*Problems* 25.6), the 'continentality effect', cold winters and hot summers.[56] It is significant that Herodotus fails to realise that conditions of near perpetual winter would have prevented keeping the herds of cattle and horses on which the Scythian lifestyle depended, as well as the cultivation of grain vital for Greek trade with the area. The attractions of a sharp antithesis with Egypt probably added persuasiveness to this chilly misconception.

It would be perverse to dispute Meuli's claim that 'die Nachrichten über die skythischen Völker, die uns Herodot im vierten Buch aufbewahrt hat, zählen mit zu den kostbarsten Schätzen seines Werks'.[57] But we should not disguise from ourselves the limitations of this Scythian ethnography. The continuity of steppe culture, where the terrain is favourable only to extensive animal husbandry, makes it profitable to compare what we know of later groups. The inadequacies of Herodotus' account become plain in the light of the justly famous report on his mission to the Great Khan at Karakorum composed by the thirteenth-century Franciscan friar William of Rubruck.[58] 'On the third day after we left Soldaia we encountered the Tartars, and when I came among them I really felt as if I were entering some other world' (1.14): thus he recalled the beginning of his immensely arduous journey. His detailed, sober and fair-minded report brings home to us how strange the culture of the Eurasian steppe must have seemed to the Greeks.

Of course, comparison is not quite straightforward. Anything William could record about Tartar manners and customs might come in useful to his superiors; there was no danger of disproportion. Some gaps in Herodotus' account might reflect an assumption that his readers know about such matters anyway: we must look to Hippocrates (*Aer.* 18.3)[59] for a description of

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56 Cf. Hippocrates, *Aer.* 19.2-4; see further W. Backhaus, 'Der Hellenen-Barbaren-Gegensatz und die Hippokratische Schrift Περὶ ἀέρων ὑδάτων τόπων', *Historia* 25 (1976), 170-85.

57 Op.cit. (n. 12), 121 (817).

58 See further P. Jackson with D. Morgan, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253-1255* (London 1990). On the validity of comparison with Mongol customs see Minns, op.cit. (n. 20), 47f.

59 Paragraph numbers are given according to Jouanna's Budé edition (Paris 1996).

the Scythians' mobile homes, but Pindar's insight (F 105)[60] into the plight of the impoverished warrior-pastoralist, forced by lack of transportation to abandon the traditional way of life, indicates that already in the first half of the fifth century the essentials of the steppe lifestyle were a commonplace. Herodotus' emphasis on the defensive advantages gained by freedom from a fixed base (46.2, 3) suggests an odd perspective on nomadic pastoralism, but can be explained by the context; after all, Darius' invasion provides the framework for this survey. But its opening does nothing to dispel the impression created when the unfortunate Enarees were introduced that Herodotus had not himself visited their homeland.

The North Pontic nomads enter Greek literature as noble milkers of mares (*Il.* 13.5f. ἀγαυῶν Ἱππημολγῶν γλακτοφάγων) and the Scythians are similarly characterized when their name first occurs, in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (F 150.15; 151). It is thus entirely appropriate that Herodotus, who is rather inclined (reasonably enough) to use diet as a criterion of ethnicity,[61] should set this distinctive element of nomadic life at the start of his survey of Scythia, his description of steppe dairy-practice (4.2) being framed by an account of the difficulties encountered on their return home by the force which had kept Western Asia in subjection for 28 years.[62] What he attempts to describe here is the treatment of mare's milk to produce the beverage commonly known by the Mongolian term *koumiss*, most likely to be familiar to Western readers from Borodin's *Prince Igor* (Act 3), where the Polovtsian guards' over-indulgence in this healthful but mildly alcoholic drink sends them to sleep and allows the hero to escape.[63] During the intense heat of summer (an aspect of steppe conditions to which, as we have seen, Herodotus is quite blind) fresh milk quickly goes off; fermented mare's milk keeps well, and not only quenches thirst but assuages hunger. It has remained a staple of steppe hospitality; and modern tourists are warned that

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60 From a *hyporcheme* addressed to Hieron I, composed sometime between 476 and 467, parodied by Aristophanes (*Aves* 941-3) and preserved by the scholiast ad loc. (I doubt if στρατῶν is sound). At A. *Pr.* 792 Girard's ingenious and economical conjecture, πόντον περῶσ' ἄφλοισβον (for πόντον/πόντου περῶσα φλοῖσβον) would imply that the image of the steppe as a sea, for us practically a cliché, was already familiar.

61 Cf. 3.23.1; 9.82.

62 I have discussed this chapter at greater length in 'Introducing the Scythians: Herodotus on koumiss (4.2)', *MH* 56 (1999), 76-86.

63 As recorded in the *Hypatian Chronicle,* sub anno 1185.

refusal to sample it may give offence; it is still a source of intense national pride.[64]

Herodotus' idea of the method employed for milking the mares is bizarre, and his description of its processing, as a collaborative activity intensively conducted by groups posted round large wooden tubs, is simply wrong. *Koumiss* requires fermentation as well as agitation, and the latter, though frequent, is not continuous. The vessel normally used was (and, in a traditional setting, still is) made of smoked horse-hide (like the psalmist's 'bottle in the smoke', *Ps.* 119.83), and hangs in the yurt on the right of the entrance, where a courteous visitor will assist the process by giving a turn or two to the churn-staff, which stands in it constantly. We notice too that Herodotus has no term for this product,[65] to distinguish it from untreated mare's milk (which is of course perfectly drinkable so long as it is fresh), though he often records foreign terms when there is no Greek equivalent. The deficiencies of his description firmly discourage us from supposing that he had enjoyed the hospitality of a nomad encampment.

His strange account is framed by evidence of Scythian ruthlessness, in the part assigned to blinded captives: τοὺς δὲ δούλους οἱ Σκύθαι πάντας τυφλοῦσι τοῦ γάλακτος εἵνεκεν, τοῦ πίνουσι ... τούτων μὲν εἵνεκα ἅπαντα, τὸν ἂν λάβωσι Σκύθαι, ἐκτυφλοῦσι· οὐ γὰρ ἀρόται εἰσί, ἀλλὰ νομάδες. 'Der Vater der Geschichte producirt hier nämlich eine so abgeschmackte Erzählung, dass sich in unsern Tagen wohl nur die vollendeste Leichtgläubigkeit bei ihr beruhigen kann'.[66] The passage looks inconsequential because Herodotus anticipates two questions which would have

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64 Thus Colin Thubron (*The Lost Heart of Asia* [London 1994], 313, 319), quoting two Kazakh women: '"On feastdays and at weddings all the old customs are coming back — the horse-contests, bridal games and costumes, and the drinking of mare's milk"'; '"We kazakhs never wore the veil, and never will. Our women were bards and warriors and even wrestled with our men ... We have good air and good soil. And our mares' milk has every vitamin! I drink it every day"'.

65 Herodotus scores rather above the average, as classical authors go, for his interest in foreign languages: see further J. Werner, 'Zur Fremdsprachenproblematik in der griechisch-römischen Antike' in C.W. Müller, K. Sier and J. Werner (eds.), *Zum Umgang mit fremden Sprachen in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (*Palingenesia* 36, Stuttgart 1992), 1-20 (esp. 9f.). On Herodotus' linguistic ideas more generally see David Chamberlain, 'On Atomics Onomastic and Metarrhythmic Translations in Herodotus', *Arethusa* 32 (1999), 263-312; Thomas Harrison, 'Herodotus' Conception of Foreign Languages', *Histos* 2, available on Internet at: http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos.

66 K. Neumann, *Die Hellenen im Skythenlande* 1 (Berlin 1855), 279.

seemed more obvious to his contemporaries (or to members of any other slave-owning society) than they do to us: what use would pastoral nomads have for slaves, and how would they prevent them from rebelling or running away? But the preparation of *koumiss* from raw milk was not a tedious mechanical task (like grinding grain) which would keep a slave well occupied throughout the working day, and the steppe economy left little alternative employment to justify the expenditure involved in feeding a slave. That *all* those whom the Scythians took captive are supposed to be engaged in an imaginary occupation enhances the improbability of these opening chapters.

The deficiencies of this section are best understood as an indication that Herodotus does not here offer the fruits of his own observation. He cannot be expected to reproduce verbatim material derived from others; in shaping it to his wider purpose he may omit details which are more important than he realised or add what seems to him an almost inevitable corollary of the rest or exploit the implications of what he believes to be a connection with some other episode. The current debate regarding his reliability would be less heated if scholars were readier to allow that Herodotus must to a large extent have synthesised material which he could not check and may not always have rightly understood.[67] This, I believe, was his situation in writing his account of Scythia.

The centrality of Olbia to his description of the North Pontic region must reflect an informant (or informants) who knew the city and its surroundings well. We can be certain that Herodotus was familiar with the treatment of the steppe peoples in the lost *Arimaspea* of Aristeas, which he twice cites (4.13.1; 16.1), though it is difficult to assess his debt to this mysterious poem.[68] More severely factual information was offered by Hecataeus (*FGrH* 1) in his *Periodos Ges,* though the few surviving fragments referring to the North Pontic area (F 184-90) are quite unrewarding. But the loss of much earlier literature falsifies our perspective, and makes us overestimate the extent to which Herodotus offered what could not be read elsewhere.

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67 For a similar argument relating to 9.92-96 see W. Burkert, 'Euenios der Seher von Apollonia und Apollon Lykeios: Mythos jenseits der Texte', *Kernos* 10 (1997), 73-81 (esp. 75).

68 Though Herodotus evidently saw no problem in an early seventh-century date for Aristeas, the *Suda* is more likely to be right in making the poet contemporary with Croesus and Cyrus, i.e. with the fall of Sardis, c. 545. See further A.I. Ivantchik, 'La datation du poème l'*Arimaspée* d' Aristéas de Proconnèse', *AC* 62 (1993), 35-67; S. West, 'Herodotus on Aristeas', *Colloquia Pontica* 2000 (forthcoming).

Of course what he and other fifth-century Greeks knew about Scythia was not restricted to what they might discover on the spot or learn from books. Merchants involved in the trade which brought to Greece grain (cf. 7.147) and slaves must have related something about life in the hinterland of the Greek colonies. Herodotus' tantalizing references to mixed Hellene/Scythian groups (the Kallippidai [4.17.1], the town of Gelonus [108]) and to the Greek mother of the unfortunately hellenophile prince Skyles (78.1) indicate some social contact, though probably with Scythian settlements rather than with the nomad world. Slaves of Scythian provenance (like the archers who provided the Athenian equivalent of a police-force, unflatteringly depicted in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*[69]) should not be overlooked as a source of information. That they included women is suggested by Hippocrates' reference to the ease with which Scythian slave-girls conceive (*Aer.* 21.3).[70] But, even if we disregard linguistic obstacles to communication, the majority of slaves from this area sold to Greeks are likely to have belonged to groups conquered by the nomads and may well themselves have been strangers to the true steppe culture.[71]

Such are the sources on which Herodotus must have based his account. His strange idea of the climate precludes a long visit to the North Pontic area; the value of a brief trip might be thought questionable. There is further aptness to the title of Hartog's widely acclaimed study of Book 4, in addition to the senses in which he intended it;[72] the mirror of Herodotus is a glass in

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69 See further M.F. Vos, *Scythian Archers in Archaic Vase-Painting* (Groningen 1963); E.M. Hall, 'The Archer-Scene in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*', *Philologus* 133 (1989), 38-54; K. Sier, 'Die Rolle des Skythen in den *Thesmophoriazusen* des Aristophanes' in C.W. Müller, K. Sier and J. Werner (see n. 65 above), 63-84; Balbina Bäbler, *Fleissige Thrakerinnen u. wehrhafte Skythen: Nichtgriechen im klassischen Athen u. ihre archäologische Hinterlassenschaft* (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998), 165-74.

70 (In support of his theory that infertility among Scythian women is due to obesity and inactivity) μέγα δὲ τεκμήριον αἱ οἰκέτιδες ποιέουσιν· οὐ γὰρ φθάνουσι παρὰ ἄνδρα ἀφικνεύμεναι καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἴσχουσι διὰ τὴν ταλαιπωρίην καὶ ἰσχνότητα τῆς σαρκός. Formally this sentence is ambiguous, as it could refer to slave-girls serving the Scythians; but a reference to girls sold into service in Greece better suits his argument.

71 See further M.I. Rostovzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford 1922), 212; M.I. Finley, 'The Black Sea and Danubian Regions and the Slave Trade in Antiquity', *Klio* 40 (1962), 51-9 (= *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece* [London 1981], 167-75, 273); D.C. Braund and G.R. Tsetskhladze, 'The Export of Slaves from Colchis', *CQ* 39 (1989), 114-25.

72 Op. cit. (n. 37), xxiii f.

which Scythia is seen indirectly, δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι. Ariantas' cauldron may lead us to reflect on the frustration entailed in investigating a culture which left practically nothing in writing,[73] a frustration felt particularly acutely when we contemplate the material remains of a people as technically sophisticated as the Scythians were. Ariantas owes to Herodotus a *monumentum* literally *aere perennius.*

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73 We cannot strictly say that the Scythians were illiterate, though surviving examples of their script are very few: see further J. Harmatta, 'Herodotus, Historian of the Cimmerians and the Scythians', in G. Nenci (ed.), *Hérodote et les peuples non grecs* (*Fondation Hardt: Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 35, Geneva 1990), 115-30; 'Die Schrift bei den antiken Steppenvölkern', *ACD* 28 (1992), 7-16; *SEG* 42 (1992), no. 681. We also have a ring bearing the name of the philhellene prince Skyles in Greek script, together with an inscription on its band which should perhaps be taken as an attempt to render Scythian in Greek letters: see further R. Rolle, *The World of the Scythians* (London 1989), 123-7. Vinogradov and Kryzickij, op.cit. (n. 55), Taf. 99; J.G. Vinogradov, *Pontische Studien* (Mainz 1997), 613-33, Tafel 39. The symbolically expressed ultimatum of 131f. is irrelevant to their use of script; it exemplifies a sort of code which had a long life in Inner Asia, and was not rendered obsolete by the advent of literacy; see further S. West, 'The Scythian Ultimatum (Herodotus iv 131, 132)', *JHS* 108 (1988), 207-11 (to the examples collected there I may add one from the late nineteenth century, illustrating the dangers inherent in this form of communication: see (Sir) George Robertson, *Chitral: The Story of a Minor Siege* [London 1898], 34).