

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

ALLGAIER (B.) **Embedded Inscriptions in Herodotus and Thucydides**. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2022. Pp. viii + 198. €49. 9783447117913.
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The use of inscriptions in Greek historiography, especially in Herodotus and Thucydides, is a topic that continues to arouse interest (recently Jan Haywood in *AJPh* 142 (2021), 217–57) and now this monograph by Benjamin Allgaier. Allgaier's aim is not to assess 'the reliability of historiographical statements about inscriptions', but to 'elucidate how embedded inscriptions contribute to the constitution of meaning in the two texts' (9). He therefore considers how the inscriptions contributed to the development of the narrative, the characterization of the protagonists in the two works and, at the same time, the creation of their authors' personae.

Allgaier writes with clarity and makes many interesting observations (for instance, on autopsy in Herodotus, 32–35). While the work also considers merely implicit or allusive references, it is mainly concerned with passages in which the two historians quote inscriptions explicitly. The monograph consists of an introductory chapter, then a first part devoted to Herodotus and a second to Thucydides.

Allgaier states that Herodotus mentions 24 inscriptions, Greek and non-Greek. In a general chapter (Chapter 2) he revisits a suggestion made by John Moles (in *Histos* 3 (1999), esp. 44–53) that Herodotus may have seen his work as a monumental inscription. On the contrary, Allgaier thinks that by using the adjective *ἐξίτηλος* (perhaps referring to the faded colour of an epigraph), Herodotus already suggests in the proem that his work, unlike the inscriptions, might be immune to the adverse effects of time. In Chapter 3, Allgaier considers the role of inscriptions in characterizing figures of the *Histories*, the most compelling case being the one analysed in 3.1: the inscribed monument that Darius is said to have erected to commemorate his conquest of the kingdom (3.88.3) reinforces Herodotus' portrayal of the king as ambitious and deceitful. In Chapter 4, Allgaier discusses four non-Greek and three Greek funerary monuments. According to Allgaier, Herodotus wants to emphasize his own fundamental role here: the historian rescues facts and characters from oblivion and safeguards memory in a more appropriate form than inscriptions (the Thermopylae epigrams in 7.228.1–3 are given as an example of partial narration). For Herodotus, epigraphic communication is not only unreliable but also tendentious.

An introductory chapter also opens the section on Thucydides (Chapter 5), which mentions only eight inscriptions explicitly, all of them Greek. Again, Allgaier disputes Moles' suggestion that Thucydides intended to compare his work to an inscription. In Chapter 6, the aim is to highlight the poor commemorative potential of the inscriptions: those on the Plataean Tripod (at 1.132.2) turn out to be modifiable or 'impermanent' and the mention of the list of cities on the tripod itself to which the Plataeans refer in their plea to the Spartans to spare them (at 3.57.2), proves to be an ineffective rhetorical argument. Moreover, in the *Funeral Oration*, Pericles (6.3) emphasizes the fixedness of the inscribed monuments, and thus their limited contribution to the *doxa* at a local level, in contrast to the spoken word that can be spread across time and space. The four inscriptions in the *excursus* on the Pisistratides (Chapter 7; Thuc. 6.54–55.59) serve mainly (but not only: § 7.3) to corroborate the results of Thucydides' investigation and thus strengthen his authority as a historian. The treaties that Thucydides generally records as

inscribed are all violated (Chapter 8): again, the inscribed texts cannot shape the course of events.

For Allgaier, Herodotus and Thucydides have the same basic idea of inscriptions: they are an unstable, ineffective, tendentious form of memory and thus inferior to what their own work can guarantee. Allgaier's exegetical line is undoubtedly sharp, but it occasionally appears one-sided, particularly regarding Herodotus. Herodotus' references to inscriptions can also be viewed in relation to a more general framework, content and context. For example, mentioning the stelae Darius erected on the Bosphorus (Chapter 3.2) that were later transferred to Byzantium neither describes a Darius incapable of securing a lasting memory through inscriptions nor emphasizes the superiority of the historian's work: it foregrounds the final victory of the Greeks which erased all memory of Persian power. In presenting the Thermopylae epigrams, especially the second (7.228.1–3), as examples of tendentious epigraphy, Allgaier overlooks the famous line ὦ ξεῖν', ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῆδε κείμεθα τοῖς κείνων ρήμασι πειθόμενοι ('Go tell the Spartans, thou that passest by, that here obedient to their words we lie', trans. A.D. Godley, 1922) that reiterates the theme of the Spartans' renowned obedience of the law. This was expressed earlier by Demaratus and certainly espoused by Herodotus (7.104.4).

One can agree with the idea that Herodotus and Thucydides wanted to create imperishable works and that the epigraphs were mainly utilized to characterize protagonists and highlight the abilities of the two historians. Particularly in the case of Herodotus, however, Allgaier seems to imagine an author who, from the proem on, is proclaiming the validity of his work by repeatedly downplaying the role of inscriptions because they are subject to disappearance, displacement and manipulation. This seems an exaggeration in the absence of any explicit statement to that effect. Allgaier does also not consider the possibility that some inscriptions, especially for Herodotus, were already embedded in the narratives he had received.

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