Ancient Greece & Persia

Analyzing Point of View Through the Writings of Herodotus, the Father of History

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The second field review has concluded

The focus of the presentation today is directly correlated to the following standard:

Teachers introduce the focus question: What were the differences in point of view and perspective between the Persians and the Greeks? The Greek city-states engaged in a pivotal conflict with the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire in the fifth century BCE, and Greek identification of the Persians as their enemies has heavily influenced later European and American perceptions. The Persian Achaemenid Empire was centered in present-day Iran and had conquered Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, and Anatolia. Its rulers represented themselves as agents of Ahuramazda, the supreme god in the regionally important religion of Zoroastrianism. The Persians subjugated the Greek city-states of western Anatolia, but they failed in three attempts to invade the Greek peninsula and defeat the Greeks, including those in the cities of Athens and Sparta, the most powerful city-states. Herodotus (ca 484-425 BCE) was a Greek scholar who wrote a vivid narrative of these events in The Persian Wars, the first history book. The clear distinction between the Greeks and Persians and the continuing influence of Greek sources (rather than a balance between Greek and Persian sources) gives the teacher a good opportunity to teach students about point of view or perspective. Students can use images of the palace art at Persepolis, particularly the tribute bearers staircase, to see the differences between the ways the Greeks represented the Persians and the Persians represented themselves.

The following questions are options for student response via written tasks/oral discussions/slide shows, etc.

Create an editorial in which the editor presents his or her point of view regarding the Greeks or Persians.

Analyze the documents and determine the Greeks’ point of view towards the Persians and the Persians’ point of view regarding themselves.

How did Herodotus’ Histories portray the Persians’ point of view regarding themselves?

Was Herodotus fair in his perspectives of the Greeks? Persians? Why or why not?
Herodotus

Sometimes called the "Father of History," Herodotus was known for writing the "Histories" (450s-420s), a story that told about the Greco-Persian wars (499-479 BCE). His narrative tells why Greece and Persia fought each other and compared the slavery in Persia with the freedom in Greece. Herodotus was set on finding out what happened in the past so that what people did will be remembered later and the reasons they had a war. The Histories include his observations and stories both of which are factual and fictional.

Herodotus was born in the city-state of Halicarnassus located in Turkey around 484 BCE and died around 425 BCE in Thurii, Italy. Herodotus and his brother, Theodorus, were from a rich family and always had plenty of money. As a boy Herodotus went to school and learned all of Homer’s works. However, in the middle of the 6th century BCE Halicarnassus became a satrapy of the Persian Empire and was ruled by a tyrant, Lygdamis. Heordotus’ family opposed this tyrant’s rule and was sent into exile on the island of Samos. Herodotus lived on the island for several years. When Herodotus became a young man he returned to Halicarnassus to take part in overthrowing the tyrant. After that, however, he never returned to his home city again.

Herodotus never really settled in one place, he spent his life traveling from one Persian territory to another. His extensive travels took him to sail through the Hellespont to the Black Sea, he crossed the Mediterranean to Egypt, he traveled through Palestine, Syria, and Babylon. He headed to Macedonia and visited all the islands of the Greek Archipelago. As he traveled, Herodotus collected what he called "personal inquires". He listened to myths, legends, recorded oral histories, collected stories, all the while making notes of everything he saw and the places he visited and put them together into a story. These stories are his attempt to explain the "why and how" of the Persian Wars (490&481-479 BCE).

When Herodotus was not traveling, he returned to Athens where he became somewhat of a celebrity and a close friend with the poet Sophocles. Sometime around 450 BCE Herodotus went to live in the Athenian colony of Thurii in southern Italy and remained there until his death around 425 BCE.
After Herodotus died, Alexandrian scholars divided his *Histories* into nine books. The first five books look into the past and try to explain the rise and fall of the Persian Empire. These books describe the geography of each state the Persians conquered and tell about their people and customs. The first half of Book I of the *Histories*, begins with the rise of Croesus, the last King of Lydia, and gives an account of his reign, his conquest of the Asiatic Greeks, and his overthrow by King Cyrus. The remainder of Book I and the three following Books primarily focus on the expansion of the Persian Kingdom from the rise of Cyrus to about 500 BCE. However Book II shifts to the customs and early history of Egypt along with several sections revealing the history of some of the Greek states, especially Athens from 560 BCE and on.

The next four books tell the story of the war itself. Including everything from the invasion of Greece by Persian emperors, Darius and Xerxes to the Greek victories at Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale in 480 & 479 BCE. Books V & VI cover the Ionian Revolt (499-494 BCE) the battle at Marathon (490 BCE), Books VII, VIII, IX, tell of the expedition of Xerxes (480-479 BCE) and of its unexpected defeat by the Greeks.

Herodotus was the first writer to successfully sew together a long and involved historical narrative with a remarkable degree of detachment when it came to the Greeks usual bias against their enemy, Persia, and their hatred for barbarian peoples. Herodotus had a remarkable gift for story telling which delighted and continues to delight generations of readers.
Herodotus Histories
A Summary

The Histories were named after the nine Muses.

Book I – Clio
Tells of the events that took place among the ruling government of Greece, as well as many other people who lived during this time. Two of the most interesting stories were that of Helen’s abduction and the Trojan War that followed. The other was Sparta’s rise to power.

Book II – Euterpe
Tells of Herodotus’ time in Egypt. This book includes the geography of Egypt, discovery of the Nile River, religious practices, animals including: cats, fogs, crocodiles, hippos, otters, winked snakes, ibises, sacred serpents, and phoenixes. It also speaks of the culture of Egypt: medicine, funeral rites, food and boats. The Great Pyramid of Giza, the rise of power of kings: Psammis, Apries, Memes, Nitocris, Moeris.

Book III – Thalia
This book has a lot to do with the political issues that Persia faced. Stories include the rise of power and ruling of King’s Darius, Cambyses II, as well as Governor Syloson of Samos. The culture of Persia is also told in this book, as is the culture of India and China and their method of collecting gold and Arabia’s method of collecting spices. Other stories included the revolt and defeat of Babylon, the madness of Cambyses, the revolt of the two Magi in Persia and the death of Cambyses.

Book IV – Melpomene
This book includes the history of the Scythians (from the land north of the Black Sea), the geography of Scythia, a comparison of Libya, Asia, and Europe, the beginning of Darius’s attack on Scythia, including the pontoon bridge over the Bosphorus, the story of the Minyae (descendants of the Argonauts) and the founding of Cyrene, and the kings of Cyrene.

Book V – Terpsichore
This book is action packed and its pages are filled with revolts, attacks, and battles. Stories include the revolt of Miletus against Persia, the Persian Royal Road from Sardis to Susa, the introduction of writing to Greece by the Phoenicians, the freeing of Athens by Sparta, and its subsequent attacks on Athens, reorganizing of the Athenian tribes by Cleisthenes, background on the tyrants of Corinth, Cypselus and his son Periander, the burning of Sardis and Darius’s vow for revenge against the Athenians, Persia’s attempts to squash the Ionian revolt, but the story that stands the test of time is the story of Alexander slaughtering the Persian envoys.

Herodotus Quote regarding War:
“In peace, sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons.”
“Civil strife is as much a greater evil than a concerted war effort as war itself is worse than peace.”
Book VI – Erato
Book six tells of the continuing political tensions among every nation in and around the territory of Greece. Stories include the fleeing of Histiaeus to Chios, the training of the Ionian fleet by Dionysius of Phocaea, the abandonment of the Ionian fleet by the Samians during the battle, the invasion of Greece under Mardonius and enslavement of Macedon, the destruction of 300 ships in Mardonius’s fleet near Athos, Darius ordering the Greeks to provide him earth and water, Aegina vs. Athens battle, the history of the Alemaeonidae, the suicide of Cleomenes in a fit of madness, the taking of Eretria by the Persians, Phaidippides’s encounter with the god Pan on a journey to Sparta requesting aid, the Athenian win at the Battle of Marathon led by Miltiades, the Spartans late arrival to assist Athens, and the death of Miltiades.

Book VII – Polymnia
Book VII contains a little bit of everything. From rebellion and death to political issues and everything in between. These stories include the assembly of an army by Darius after learning about the defeat at Marathon, the feud over which son should succeed him (Xerxes I is chosen), the death of Darius, the defeat of the Egyptian rebels by Xerxes, preparations for war; Xerxes’ canal and pontoon bridges across the Hellespont, the destruction and rebuilding of the bridges built by the Egyptians and Phoenicians at Abydos, the destruction of 400 Persian ships due to a storm, 6000 Greeks led by Leonidas I to Thermopylae to delay the Persian army, the battle of Thermopylae, the secret pass divulged by Ephialtes of Trachis in which Hydarnes uses to lead forces around the mountains to encircle the Greeks, and the Greek defeat and order by Xerxes to remove Leonidas’s head and attach his torso to a cross.

Book VIII – Urania
Most of the stories contained in Book VIII are about vengeance and conquest. From the Battle of Salamis to the vengeance of Xerxes against Panionius, every event seemed to leave the land in shambles. The destruction of two hundred ships due to a storm, the retreat of the Greek fleet after hearing of the defeat at Thermopylae, the rescue of Delphi from a Persian attack, the description of Angarum, the Persian riding post, the rise in favor of Artemisia, the Persian woman commander, and her council to Xerxes in favor of returning to Perisia, the attack on Andros by Themistocles, the Athenian fleet commander and most heroic Greek at Salamis, the escape of Xerxes and leaving behind 300,000 troops, the ancestors of Alexander I of Macedon, and the refusal of an attempt by Alexander to seek a Persian alliance with Athens are some of the highlights included in Book VIII.

Book IX – Calliope
The last of the Histories, Book IX is one of blood and gore. Some of the stories include the slaying of Mestistius, leader of the Persian cavalry by the Athenians, the death of Mardonius by Aemnestus, the mutilation of the wife of Mestistus ordered by Amestris, the wife of Xerxes, the death of Mestistus after his intent to rebel, the Persian retreat to Thebes where they are eventually slaughtered at the Battle of Plataea, Alexander’s warning to the Greeks of a coming attack, the Persian defeat in Ionia by the Greek fleet at the Battle of Mycale and the Ionian revolt, and a description and dividing of the spoils.
The History of Herodotus—Book VII

Written by Herodotus in 440 BCE
Translated by George Rawlinson

In 480 BC, the son of Darius I, King Xerxes, decided to get his revenge on the Greeks for the loss his father had suffered during the first Persian invasion of Greece. He amassed a huge army of over 200,000 soldiers and 1,000 warships to support his efforts.

In this excerpt from Herodotus’ Book VII, he includes a speech that Xerxes delivers. Read the passage and circle any vocabulary words you do not know and underline 5-7 words/phrases that support the main idea of the passage.

“Persians, I have brought you together because I wished to exhort you to behave bravely, and not to sully with disgrace the former achievements of the Persian people, which are very great and famous. Rather let us one and all, singly and jointly, exert ourselves to the uttermost; for the matter wherein we are engaged concerns the common weal. Strain every nerve, then, I beseech you, in this war. Brave warriors are the men we march against, if report says true; and such that, if we conquer them, there is not a people in all the world which will venture thereafter to withstand our arms. And now let us offer prayers to the gods who watch over the welfare of Persian, and then cross the channel.”

Xerxes, King of Persia

Herodotus of Halicarnassus

http://www.livius.org/site/assets/files/1991/herodotus_agora_mus1.jpg
The History of Herodotus—Book VIII

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Once Xerxes' soldiers had crossed Hellespont, Xerxes questioned each of the leaders, generals, and satraps who accompanied him on his quest to crush Greece. Xerxes was wondering about his possible successes as he marched toward Athens through the Peloponnesus Peninsula.

The following assessment of Xerxes potential for success comes from Artemisia who was known as Artemisia I of Caria. She was the queen of Halicarnassus in 480 BCE and an ally of Xerxes against the independent Greek city-states during the second Persian invasion of Greece. She personally commanded five naval ships in the battle of Artemesium and the Battle of Salamis. Herodotus, a native of Halicarnassus as well, praised Artemisia for her courage and the respect in which Xerxes held her advice and counsel.

In this excerpt from Herodotus' Book VIII, he includes Artemisia's thoughts regarding the Persian invasion of Greece. Read the passage and circle any vocabulary words you do not know and underline 5-7 words/phrases that support the main idea of the passage.

Artemisia's assessment for Xerxes' success follows:

"...This is my advice. Spare thy ships, and do not risk a battle; for these people are as much superior to thy people in seamanship, as men to women. What so great need is there for thee to incur hazard at sea? Art thou not master of Athens, for which thou didst undertake thy expedition? Is not Greece subject to thee? Not a soul now resists thy advance. They, who once resisted, were handled even as they deserved. Now learn how I expect that affairs will go with thy adversaries. If thou art not over-hasty to engage with them by sea, but wilt keep thy fleet near the land, then whether thou abides as thou art, or marchest forward towards the Peloponnesse, thou wilt easily accomplish all for which thou art come hither. The Greeks cannot hold out against thee very long; thou wilt soon part them asunder, and scatter them to their several homes. In the island where they lie, I hear they have no food in store; nor is it likely, if thy land force begins its march towards the Peloponnesse, that they will remain quietly where they are—at least such as come from that region. Of a surety they will not greatly trouble themselves to give battle on behalf of the Athenians..."

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the advice that Artemisia is giving to Xerxes?

2. What is the point of view of Artemisia toward Xerxes? Cite evidence to support your claim?

3. What is the point of view of Artemisia toward the Greeks? Cite evidence to support your claim?
Persian Empire, 481-480 BCE

In 481 BCE Xerxes was persuaded by his advisors to avenge his father’s defeat in Greece. He amassed an army of over 200,000 men from throughout his empire and a naval fleet of 1,000 ships. He headed to Greece where he defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae and then burned the city of Athens. However, Xerxes then lost several battles to the Greeks and had to retreat to his homeland without having conquered the Greeks.

http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/PersianEmpire03.jpg

Map of the Persian Empire at the time of Xerxes. **Red lines** denote the route of Xerxes’ army across the empire.

Use the map to answer the following questions:

1. Infer from which city Xerxes departed on his quest to defeat the Greeks? Why did you select that city?

2. The Persian Empire bordered what ancient civilization to the east?

3. Infer why the Persians did not travel farther east as they increased the size of their empire.

4. What is surprising about the Persian Empire’s borders?
The Persian Invasion of Greece by Xerxes

Close-up of Greece and "war theater" area with the Persian invasion routes. Note hotspots for important stages and battles of Xerxes' campaign. (Note also the inclusion of the Battle of Marathon from the previous Persian War).

Now answer the following questions regarding the invasion of Greece:

1. Infer how the Persian army may have been able to cross the isthmus at Hellespont on their way to Greece.

2. Infer where the naval ships for Persia may have come from. You should consult the map on the first page for clues.
Xerxes, to try them, sent Mardonius and questioned each, whether a sea-fight should be risked or no.

Mardonius accordingly went round the entire assemblage, beginning with the Sidonian monarch, and asked this question; to which all gave the same answer, advising to engage the Greeks, except only Artemisia, who spake as follows (SS 1.):

"Say to the king, Mardonius, that these are my words to him: I was not the least brave of those who fought at Euboea, nor were my achievements there among the meanest; it is my right, therefore, O my lord, to tell thee plainly what I think to be most for thy advantage now. This then is my advice. Spare thy ships, and do not risk a battle; for these people are as much superior to thy people in seamanship, as men to women. What so great need is there for thee to incur hazard at sea? Art thou not master of Athens, for which thou didst undertake thy expedition? Is not Greece subject to thee? Not a soul now resists thy advance. They who once resisted, were handled even as they deserved. (SS 2.) Now learn how I expect that affairs will go with thy adversaries. If thou art not over-hasty to engage with them by sea, but wilt keep thy fleet near the land, then whether thou abidest as thou art, or marchest forward towards the Peloponness, thou wilt easily accomplish all for which thou art come hither. The Greeks cannot hold out against thee very long; thou wilt soon part them asunder, and scatter them to their several homes. In the island where they lie, I hear they have no food in store; nor is it likely, if thy land force begins its march towards the Peloponness, that they will remain quietly where they are- at least such as come from that region. Of a surety they will not greatly trouble themselves to give battle on behalf of the Athenians. (SS 3.) On the other hand, if thou art hasty to fight, I tremble lest the defeat of thy sea force bring harm likewise to thy land army. This, too, thou shouldst remember, O king; good masters are apt to have bad servants, and bad masters good ones. Now, as thou art the best of men, thy servants must needs be a sorry set. These Egyptians, Cyprians, Cilicians, and Pamphylians, who are counted in the number of thy subject-allies, of how little service are they to thee!"
Stairway to the King at Persepolis

The capital at Persepolis was built on top of a plateau and had pillars sixty feet wide that held up the gold-rimmed roof. The two stairways that led to the top were wide enough for ten soldiers on horseback to ride side by side, and the apandana, audience hall, could hold 10,000 people. It was an ancient capital of the second Persian dynasty.

**Persepolis** is the Greek name (from perses/polis for 'Persian City') for the ancient city of Parsa, located seventy miles northeast of Shiraz in present-day Iran. The name Parsa meant 'City of The Persians' and construction began at the site in 518 BCE under the rule of King **Darius the Great** (who reigned 522-486 BCE). Darius made Parsa the new capital of the Persian Empire.

Limestone was the main building material used in Persepolis. After natural rock had been leveled and the depressions filled in, tunnels for sewage were dug underground through the rock. A large elevated cistern was carved at the eastern foot of the mountain to catch rain water for drinking and bathing.

The terraced plan of the site around the palace walls enabled the Persians to easily defend any section of the front. The ancient historian Diodorus Siculus recorded that Persepolis had three walls with ramparts, all with fortified towers, always manned. The first wall was over seven feet tall, the second, fourteen feet, and the third wall, surrounding all four sides, was thirty feet high. With such fortifications
opposing him it is an impressive feat that Alexander the Great managed to overthrow such a city; but
overthrow it he did.

According to Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian who wrote the *Library of World History*, the fall of
Persepolis was complete after Alexander the Great’s defeat of Persia in 330 BCE. Because Diodorus’
 writings are dated between 60-30 BCE, they are considered a secondary source for the Persian Wars.

Diodorus Siculus

http://www.livius.org/site/assets/files/7319/
“Alexander held games in honor of his victories. He performed costly sacrifices to the gods and entertained his friends bountifully. ..Thais by name and Athenian by origin, said that for Alexander it would be the finest of all his feats in Asia if he joined them in a triumphal procession, set fire to the palaces, and permitted women’s hands in a minute to extinguish the famed accomplishments of the Persians...someone shouted out to form up and to light torches, and urged all to take vengeance for the destruction of the Greek temples [burned by the Persians when they invaded Athens in 480 BCE]. Others took up the cry and said that this was a deed worthy of Alexander alone. When the king had caught fire at their words, all leaped up from their couches and passed the word along to form a victory procession in honor of the god Dionysus. Promptly many torches were gathered. Female musicians were present at the banquet, so the king led them all out to the sound of voices and flutes and pipes, Thais...leading the whole performance. She was the first, after the king, to hurl her blazing torch into the palace. As the others all did the same, immediately the entire palace area was consumed, so great was the conflagration. It was most remarkable that the impious act of Xerxes, king of the Persians, against the acropolis at Athens should have been repaid in kind after many years by one woman, a citizen of the land which had suffered it, and in sport.”

Based upon the illustrations and notes provided, answer the following questions:

1. What was the purpose for Persepolis?

2. Why would the ancient Persians have created an elevated cistern on the eastern side of Persepolis?

3. Based upon the plan of Persepolis, what might have been the purpose for the two propylons?

4. Infer why there would have been three palaces built within Persepolis.

5. What is the point of view of the Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, regarding the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander the Great and his followers? Cite evidence to support your claim.
"The Persians"
By Aeschylus

Aeschylus, the Greek dramatist, departed from writing plays with tragic themes to honor the Greek victories over the Persians. Given that Aeschylus fought the Persians under Darius at Marathon in 490 BCE, he was somewhat biased toward the Athenians, and intentionally represents the enemy as arrogant, luxury-loving, and overly emotional. Aeschylus does however; sympathize with Xerxes’s family and royal court.

Cast includes:
Atossa, widow of Darius and mother of Xerxes
Messenger
Ghost of Darius
Chorus of Persian Elders, who compose the Persian Council of State

The Plot:
"The Persians" takes place before the Council-Hall of the Persian Kings in Susa, 480 BCE where a Chorus of the Elders await news of King Xerxes’ invasion against the Greeks. Atossa, Xerxes’ mother, who is fearful and anxious, soon joins them. When a messenger finally arrives, he describes the Battle of Salamis and its gory outcome.
Xerxes, however, has some how escaped. It is then that Atossa and the Chorus summon the ghost of her dead husband, Darius the Great, to rise from his tomb. When Darius learns of the Persian defeat he is furious with his son’s decision to invade Greece, which, he argues, merely angered the gods and led to the Persian defeat. Before the ghost of Darius departs, he prophesies another Persian defeat at the Battle of Plataea (479BCE).

Dressed in torn and tattered robes, disgraced and defeated, Xerxes arrives home. There the king along with the Chorus mourn the enormous Persian defeat.
Source: *The Persians* by Aeschylus, 472 BCE (an excerpt)

A bust of Aeschylus

Greek tragedy was a popular form of drama performed in across Greece, beginning in the 6th century BCE. Below is a sample of a mask from a tragedy like *The Persians*.

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**Ghost of Darius**

*Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,*

*Remember Athens: henceforth let not pride,*

*Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp*

*Another’s and her treasured happiness*

*Shed on the ground: such insolent attempts*

*Awake the vengeance of offended Jove.*

*But you, whose age demands more temperate thoughts,*

*With words of well-placed counsel teach his youth*

*To curb that pride, which from the gods calls down*

*Destruction on his head.*
Analyze the excerpt from the play and collaborate with your partner in order to answer the following questions:

1. Who is Darius addressing in the excerpt? How do you know?

2. Who has he angered? What might be the result of this anger?

3. What is the point of view of Darius the Ghost?
Born George Noel Gordon, Lord Byron, was born in London, England, on January 22, 1788. He was the only son of Captain John Byron. He attended Harrow, a public school, and then later Trinity College in Cambridge where he received his MA in 1808.

Lord Byron led a life filled with triumphs and tragedies, which influenced his connection with the Greeks. Lord Byron was contacted by the London Greek Committee to act as its agent in aiding the Greek war for independence from the Turks. Byron accepted the offer and on July 16, 1823, left on a chartered ship bound for the Ionian island of Cephalonia, and on August 2, he settled in Metaxata. Byron sent 4000 pounds of his own money to prepare the Greek fleet for sea service. On December 29, he sailed for Missolonghi where he joined Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos, leader of the forces in western Greece, and joined in the plans to attack the Turkish held fortress of Lepanto. Byron employed a fire master to prepare artillery and took under his own command to pay the Souliot soldiers, the bravest of all the Greeks.

In the spring of 1824 Byron was caught in a violent rainstorm which left him with a horrific cold, resulting in his slipping into a coma and leading to his eventual death on April 19, 1824.

Byron was deeply mourned by the Greek community. He was known as a hero throughout their land. His body was embalmed; the heart was removed and buried in Missolonghi, Greece.

Roll on, deep and dark blue
ocean, roll. Ten thousand
fleets sweep over thee in vain.
Man marks the earth
with ruin, but his control
stops with the shore.

Lord Byron

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http://i.colnect.net/images/J/166/561/Centenary-Death-of-Lord-Byron.jpg
Isles of Greece

The mountains look on Marathon-
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sat on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;

And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations,-all were his!
He counted them at break of day-
And when the sun set, where were they?
Analyze the poem and collaborate with your partner in order to respond to the following:

1. Why does Lord Byron mention Marathon in this poem?

2. What king is Lord Byron referring to in the poem?

3. What is Lord Byron's point of view regarding the Greeks? How do you know?