

Shortly after the nascent Athenian democracy's surprising military victory of 506, Herodotus depicts an assembly of Sparta's allies convened to respond to Athens' growing prominence (5.91-3). At this meeting the Spartans argue for restoring the Pisistratid tyranny before Athens upsets the current balance of power, but this proposal is successfully countered by the Corinthian Socles who argues, based on his own city's experience of tyranny, that supporting the institution in any Greek state is unjust. This paper explores how the Socles scene employs dramatic irony to position its portrayal of the competing interests between individual state advantage (Sparta) and pan-Hellenic *eleutheria* (Socles) as an interpretive tool for understanding the already present political tensions that Athens will go on to exploit both to win the Persian Wars and, later, to establish its empire.

The whole of the 506 debate over Athens' future and Socles' speech in particular have attracted a great deal of critical attention. Scholars have found in the scene a microcosm of the themes (Gray), narrative techniques (Griffiths, Gould), and interpretive issues (Forsdyke) that characterize the *Histories* as a whole. Concurrently, much attention has been paid to identifying the scene's apparent dramatic irony, with commentators reading the defense of Athens' freedom by the Corinthians against their subsequent suffering at the hands of this now freed state's eventual imperialism (Strasburger, Raaflaub 224, Moles 39-40, Wecowski 252ff. and Pelling 107-9). This later state of affairs, well known from Thucydides, was, of course, the contemporary context in which Herodotus completed his *Histories* (see van der Veen 71 for a dissenting view). This paper will seek to combine considerations of the sequence's paradigmatic importance and the exploration of its irony by demonstrating how the latter serves a programmatic purpose within the narrative. Read in this manner, the Socles scene does not simply foreshadow future relations between Athens and Sparta's allies but also, in doing so, introduces for the reader a conceptual framework for understanding *why* this later situation emerges.

In particular, I will focus on how Socles' rescue of the Athenian democracy through an appeal to pan-Hellenic respect for *eleutheria* as against individual state interests vividly sets out for the reader the tremendous power over a Greek audience of the very abstract value that will be critical to the Athenians' subsequent ability to unite opposition against Persia and, in doing so, emerge as a leading state. By attributing such an argument to a Corinthian, however, I contend that Herodotus also provides a latent reminder of how Athens will increasingly exploit the position afforded it as a champion of *eleutheria* to pursue its own state-specific goals. This will lead to the eventual, ironic emergence of Athens in the eyes of states like Corinth as the *polis tyrannos par excellence*. I will further argue that the debate allows the author to provide a conceptual space in which this subsequent evolution can occur by portraying appeals to individual state gain and pan-Hellenic *eleutheria* as already in active tension with one another in 506. Finally, I will demonstrate that Herodotus, by using irony to introduce the theme of the ambivalent power of *eleutheria* precisely at the point in the *Histories* when Athens first begins emerging as a major state, provides a key tool to his reader for understanding the coalescence and subsequent collapse of Greek unity around Athens. This degeneration in turn falls into the author's overall vision of the necessarily malleable nature of power throughout history (see Raaflaub 247).