

Persians: uncivilized savages or just non-Greek? Use of the word Barbarian in Herodotus' Historiês

By Amir Kasravi

Synopsis

Herodotus, in his book *Historiês*, repeatedly uses the words "**barbarian**" and "**Persian**" synonymously. The question that has perplexed me for some time is why? Why would Herodotus use these two words synonymously?

In current English usage, "**barbarian**" is derogatory. And therefore, for many Iranians of Persian decent, as well as some scholars who are only familiar with an English version of this historical text, this is an unsettling aspect of Herodotus writings.

In his recent lecture "The Great Land of Sophy"¹ Mr. Abbas Milani, referring to the Herodotus *Historiê*, stated:

"Though in what must be the first clear instance of smug Euro-centrism, he (Herodotus) calls Persians 'Barbarians', he nevertheless marvels at their many accomplishments."

Mr. Abbas Milani's "highly selective series of images from a long and complicated history" is a good synopsis of 2500 years of Iranian history. And I'm sure the lecture, as brief as it was, was tailored for the occasion and, as he noted, allowed the audience that night "to dwell on the glories of our past". However, if he wanted to specifically refer to Herodotus and his book, Mr. Milani's well-known precision and accuracy would have forced him into more in-depth research.

I intend to show that today's readers of the *Historiê*, including some scholars, are misunderstanding or misinterpreting the word "**barbarian**" from that meant by Herodotus.

This article contends that the meaning of "**barbarian**" as used in contemporary English language to denote uncivilized or savage, is not a true representation of the original meaning as used by Herodotus some 2400 years ago. How? Answer to this conundrum lies in the fact that origin of the English word **Barbarian** is from word "βάρβαρος" pronounced barbaros or barbarous. In Greek language, this word simply means "a foreigner², someone non-Greek". Even in today's written Greek, this word is used to describe non-Greek people as they are related to their land or culture but alien from the land of Greece.³

Argument

It would be unreasonable to believe that a historian of Herodotus' stature could be ignorant or would disregard his own knowledge of Persian achievements, and refer to Persians as savages and uncivilized in his use of the word "**barbarian**".

Margaret C. Miller (*Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) reviewed the period when Herodotus wrote his *Histories*. Craig Champion wrote of Miller's study:⁴

Miller's study suggests that the Athenian reaction to Achaemenid Persian culture was much more complex and nuanced than this alleged sort of cultural polarisation, painted as it is in stark black-and-white terms. Brief consideration of two key literary texts, Aeschylus' *Persae* and Herodotus' *Histories*, supports Miller's position.

¹ - www.iranian.com

² - Alan Buist, has first brought it to my attention

³ - Research in Greek language by Deena Stigas

⁴ - <http://www.und.ac.za/und/classics/99-06mil.html>

Part Two (pp. 135-258), consisting in a further five chapters, is entitled 'Perserie' (Athenian uses of Persian culture), and examines the cultural politics and cultural semantics of Athenian adoption of Persian 'luxury culture'. The evidence is of diverse types. Chapter 6 (pp. 135-52) considers the questions of imitation, adaptation, derivation and appropriation of Achaemenid metalware in Athenian pottery styles. Chapter 7 (pp. 153-87) takes up the question of Athenian incorporation of Persian dress, demonstrating that Athenians wore 'Persian belts' in Athens and developed an increasing awareness of 'vestimental ethnicity'. In Chapter 8 (pp. 188-217) Miller argues that, thereby creating an elite luxury culture which continued upper class practices of Athenian aristocratic hegemony before the Persian Wars.

Furthermore, from the Athenian perspective we cannot simply talk of one cultural reaction to things Persian: 'No complex society will respond monolithically to the same stimulus. The richer the texture, the more varied the response, because alien objects have potentially different meanings and different uses for different social strata' (p. 247). Miller goes on to suggest psychological tactics of domestication (familiarisation, neutralisation) and symbolic domination (marginalisation, perversion) of alien objects from Achaemenid Persia in order to understand 'Perserie' in Athens (pp. 248-50).[[7]] The Athenian elite, Miller argues, needed increasingly greater precision in articulating social status in a society rapidly growing more complex and differentiated. Yet over time the spread of 'Perserie'(bold by me) to the non-elite Athenians may have resulted in a semiotic devaluation of Persian cultural objects which put the wealthy on a new course of more austere cultural expression.

As Miller confirms, Persian culture at the time of Herodotus, if not superior, was at least seen as an advanced culture and appealing to upper strata of Greek community. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Herodotus used the word barbarian to identify Persian as savage, uncivilized or uncultured.

It is also improbable that Herodotus was unaware of the rich Persian cultural phenomena in his time. The Greek term *historiê*, now history, used for the title of his book, to Herodotus meant first-hand research. As such, one would expect Herodotus to have first-hand knowledge of Persian culture, which based on the standards of that era, was far from uncivilized. Further, in his opening phrase of *historiês* Herodotus says:

1.0] THESE are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feuds.⁵

Accordingly, his intention was to write about two groups of people, Greeks and **Barbarians**, or others who were non-Greek.

It is clear that Herodotus was knowledgeable of Persian culture and, being born in Halikaranossos⁶ a city then under Persian rule, was influenced by it.

Did Herodotus truly mean to imply Persians or Persian culture was uncivilized? That would suggest some type of the Greek chauvinism by Herodotos, who was after all, a subject of the Persian Empire⁷. Again that seems unreasonable because it would contradict his intention of compiling "first-hand research" or *historiês*.

⁵ - Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, George Rawlinson, tr., vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), Book 1; and vol. 2, book 3

⁶ - Perseus encyclopedia

⁷ - <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Herodotus/Herodotus7.html>, & Perseus encyclopedia

The following from Anthony G. Keen,⁸ The Queen's University of Belfast in his review on Pericles Georges - Barbarian Asia and the Greek Experience: From the Archaic Period to the Age of Xenophon. Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

According to Anthony G. Keen, Georges shows that the distinction between Greek and non-Greek, in Herodotus' view, was not as black and white as was declared by Greeks after the fifth century.

The next two chapters, 5, "Herodotus' Typology of Hellenism" (pp. 115-166), and 6, "Herodotus' Typology of Barbarism" (pp. 167-206), are, as the titles indicate, a matched pair. In the former, G.(eorges) proceeds through various Greek groupings, and demonstrates how Herodotus shows that these Greeks are little removed from *barbarian* origins. In the latter, G.(eorges) does the same for the barbaroi; here Herodotus appears to be showing how close many of the *barbarians* are to being Greek. G.(eorges)'s central point in these chapters is to show how, so far as Herodotus was concerned, the division between Greeks and barbaroi was not, as later Greeks would see it, an uncrossable gulf. Rather, it was a matter of evolution; many of the people who were now Greek had once been barbaroi (including, according to G.(eorges), the Athenians), and the *barbaroi* had the potential to become Greek. In this context the debate on the constitutions in Book III (this is discussed in page 6) takes on a new resonance; for, G.(eorges), asserts, Herodotus genuinely believed that the debate took place, and that this was a moment when the Persians could have become Greek, had they followed Otanes' advice and become democratic; but Darius decided upon monarchy, and so the *Persians* remained *barbaroi*. Whether one believes this or not, one cannot deny that the idea is intriguing, and that it is well-argued.

Up to this point, G.(eorges), has been dealing with the Greek conception of *barbaroi* down to the defining moment of the Persian War of 481-479 (even though Aeschylus and Herodotus wrote after this time, their themes were of this period). In the final chapter, "Xenophon: the Satrap of Scillus" (pp. 207-246), he leaps more than a century to one of the most philobarbarian writers of Greek Antiquity. He has much of interest to say, pointing out for example that, whereas for earlier writers the *barbaroi* were natural slaves, to Xenophon the finest of them were noble men to be admired, and natural servility was a characteristic of the Athenian democratic masses; to Xenophon Persia is a source for a morality that Greece has abandoned (hence his great moral tract centres on the person of the barbaros Cyrus). G. (eorges) even revives the idea, often seen as unfashionable these days, that the Persia of the Cyropaedia is not entirely divorced from the historical Persia, or at least is Xenophon's rose-tinted view of it. Nonetheless, this last chapter is rather uneasily attached to the work as a whole; the sudden leap from Herodotus to Xenophon, passing over such important writers as Thucydides (who admittedly had little to say on the matter of barbaroi) and Euripides (who had rather more) is a dislocation for the reader, and one wonders whether this final chapter wouldn't have been better as a separate article, which would then leave a rather more coherent work on the conception of the barbaros in the Archaic period.

Evidence

Why this seeming contradiction in Herodotus? I believe the explanation lies in the dictionary. All dictionaries and other documents, including Greek Morphology, indicate the word *barbarian* originates from the Greek word *Barbaros, Barbarous* - which simply means others, foreigner, non-Greek, or any foreigner with a different language or custom.

To substantiate my contention, I will refer to numerous old and modern texts, dictionaries, encyclopedias, thesaurus and other historians, including Herodotus and his book *Historiês*.

⁸ - <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1995/95.10.14.html>

Even though synonyms have similar meaning and use, they are not identical and are not perfect substitutes for each other. And this imperfection would be more apparent when the word is translated from one language to another. Translation often strips the word of its original cultural value and meaning, leaving a mere conceptual shadow of the original. In addition, the personal choice of a word and the comprehension of the translators are additional complexities. And my argument is that the word barbarian has gone through all the above, plus 2400 years of evolution⁹.

However, there is no doubt that in the modern English language, the word *barbarian*, for English speaking users, depending of its use, is referred to a general concept that is more in line with the meaning of savage, bully, anti-intellectual, alien, uncivilized or uncultured. And its original Greek meaning as non-Greek, is now obsolete.

Dictionary references

One modern reference which is very similar to many other modern dictionaries is the Penguin Dictionary of English Synonyms 1991. Barbarian is defined as:

1. Savage
2. Brute, ruffian, brutal monster uncivilized, rude, inhuman

This modern dictionary, as expected, lacks the etymology of the word and has no reference to its origin.

On the other hand, without exception, all dictionaries with an etymological approach, including the old text of Greek-English dictionaries, indicate the origin of the word Barbarian refers to the Greek word, *βάρβαρος*, *barbarous*, or *barbaros*, and that it is similar in meaning to non-Greek, foreigner or others.

For example, Cassell's New Dictionary First Edition 1919 Seventeenth Edition 1956 notes the origin:

barbarian Latin barbaria, see BARBAROUS
BARBAROUS Greek, (prob. a word imitative of unintelligible speech), a Foreigner in speech

The Sixth Edition Concise Oxford Dictionary provides the following:

1. **Barbarian**: Rough, wild, or uncultured. Origin: of any foreigner with different language or customs. Greek: barbarikos (*barbaros* foreign) Barbarism: word or action not in accordance with normal standards; Instance of this. Greek: *barbarismos* (barbarizo speak like a foreigner)

A slightly different connotation is provided in an earlier Concise Oxford Dictionary Eighth edition 1990:

⁹ - An extreme example of this kind of translations, due to its subjectivity, are Molavi's (Rumi) Divan دیوان شمس تبریزی. Translations of his poem by English speaking scholar, Andrew Harvey in his book the Way of Passion, is very comprehensible for English speaking readers. But, this translation with all the "profound mystical experiences" of the author, for Persian speaking readers, more are-creation of the poem of Jalal-ud-din Rumi. Therefore, as compared with original poems in Persian, not as meaningful. While in comparison, English speaking readers of Rumi's Whispers of the Beloved, by Mariam Mafi & Azima Melita Kolin, find it simple and not that poetic, while meanings are closer to the original verses. The first translation is more in line with Western culture, while the second one represents a Persian view and understanding

2- Uncivilized [orig. of any foreigner with different language or customs] French **barbarien** from *barbare* as (**BARBAROUS**) BARBAROUS [orig. of foreign language or people: from Latin, from Greek **barbaros** foreign

The Webster Dictionary, 1913 provides the following Biblical reference:

1. A foreigner. [Historical]
Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a **barbarian**, and he that speaketh shall be a **barbarian** unto me. Cor. xiv. 11.

The Webster Dictionary, 1928 notes:

3. A foreigner. The Greeks and Romans denominated most foreign nations **barbarians**; and many of these were less civilized than themselves, or unacquainted with their language, laws and manners. But with them, the word was less reproachful than with us.

The American Heritage Dictionary of English Etymology notes "**barbarian**" is: from Latin **barbarous**, from Greek **barbaros**, non-Greek, foreign.

As indicated above, the Greek word "**Barbaros**" has been irresponsibly translated to English word **Barbarian**. And with all its pronunciation similarity, it neither denotes the actual intention of the word used by Greeks, nor specifically, by Herodotus in his book, *Historiê*.

Morphology of the word

Now we go back to the word **barbarian** to explore its Greek morphology.

From online Perseus Project,¹⁰ a morphological analysis is available by using the morphological analyzer which allows us to enter one or more Greek words in Latin transliteration at the prompt and returns the morphological analysis for each term
In ancient text **Βάρβαρος** = **barbaros** = foreign

In modern text **Βάρβαρος** = **barbarian, barbaric, barbarous, barbaros**

Many derivatives¹¹ from barbarous in Greek are below

Barbarous, i. e. not Greek, foreign, known to Hom. as appears from the word *barbarophônos* in Il.--as Subst. **barbaroi**, hoi, originally all that were not Greeks, specially the Medes and **Persians**, Hdt., attic: Il. after the Persian war the word took the sense of outlandish, *amathês kai barbaros* Ar.; *barbarôtatos* id=Ar., Thuc.

barbarikos barbaric, foreign, like a foreigner, opp. to *Hellênikos*, Simon.; to **barbarikon**, hoi **barbaroi**, Thuc. esp. of the Persians, Xen.--adv., **barbarikôs kai Hellênikôs** i. e. both in Persian and Greek, id=Thuc.

barbarizô [barbaros] to behave like a **barbarian**, speak like one, Hdt.: to speak broken Greek, speak gibberish, Plat.

To hold with the **barbarians**, i. e. the Persians, Xen.

Following from Liddell and Scott.

¹⁰ - Greek Morphological Analyzer. and <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/engreek?lang=greek>:

¹¹ - Liddell and Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1889

barba^r-isti , Adv. in *barbarous* fashion, Plu.2.336c. in *barbarian* or foreign language, kekaxontai b. Ar.Fr.79 ; axuneta *barbaristi* parakalountôn App.Mith.50 , cf. A.D.Adv.162.5.

Another derivative but again based on different books:¹²

phi^l-o-barba^ros , on fond of *barbarians* or foreigners, Plu.2.857a.

As is evident, numerous old texts, refer to barbarian as non-Greek and many other words that derives from it is also, simply referenced to foreigners or foreign language. Indeed, no reference to *barbarian* as savage, uncultured or uncivilized has been found in a search of many old texts.

D. Godley, in his translation of Herodotus, Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920 states that originally the word *barbarian* was used to differentiate Greek from non-Greek, a foreigner. And only after Fifth century, this word displayed a derogatory and culturally, inferior concept.

Godley believed that because Greeks were outlanders and under constant threat from the Persian Empire, in response they considered the Persians *barbarian*. An extract regarding a subject, Pythius, from Herodotus' Histories is historical evidence that at that time Persians were in control of Asiatic Greece and also, were manipulating the alliance systems of European

Cultural similarities in the other nations

Historically, unintelligible or unacquainted language among some neighboring nations, have caused each to call each other's language incomprehensible. One example is among native Indians. It is more often suggested that in Sioux word, **Sha-hi-yena** "Cheyenne" means "those who speak unintelligible tongue, or "alien". Therefore, the name of the native Indian tribe Cheyenne, derives from Sioux, indicating that they were unable to communicate with each other in their mother tongue¹³

As inconceivable as it is, Arabs, after invaded Persia, called them Ajam (عجم) meaning Dumb. And this was due to their unfamiliarity with Persian's spoken words. It is interesting that according to the Haim Third Edition. The Shorter Persian – English Dictionary Tehran 1936 Ajam (عجم) translated to Foreign, non-Arab, and *barbarian*.

In M. Moin, A Persian Dictionary, Seventh Edition 1364, the following is provided:

Ajam, non-Arab, Iranian. Or Ajami, non-Arab, (بی خبر) = ignorant (غافل) Unaware, negligent.

And vis-à-vis, among Persian, as we know, colloquially the word Arab refers to a person with low intelligence.

According to M. Moin, A Persian dictionary, the word Arab, is referred to a Tazi opposite to Ajam and (شهر نشین یا بدوی). Also (از بیخ عرب بودن), completely unaware or ignorant.

Hebrews called the rest of mankind Gentiles. According to online Catholic Encyclopedia:

Gentiles (Heb. Gôyîm; Gr. ethne, ethnikai, Hellenes; Vulg. Gentes, Gentiles, Graeci): A word of Latin origin and usually employed in the plural. In the English versions of both Testaments it collectively designates the nations distinct from the Jewish people.

¹² - The National Science Foundation provided support for entering this text.

¹³ - <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/kansas/kansaskansans/page18.htm>

But from the Augustan age however the name was given by the Romans to all tribes which had no Greek or Roman accomplishments.

Herodotus' credibility

A significant aspect of the *historiês* is Herodotus' many anti-Persian views that are apparent in different sections of the book. He additionally has a tendency to exaggerate and back up his exaggeration by yet another fabrication. In book three based on his observation with his own eyes, he maintains that Persians have feeble skulls because they wear turbans.

[3.12] On the field where this battle was fought I saw a very wonderful thing which the natives pointed out to me. The bones of the slain lie scattered upon the field in two lots, those of the Persians in one place by themselves, as the bodies lay at the first - those of the Egyptians in another place apart from them. If, then, you strike the Persian skulls, even with a pebble, they are so weak, that you break a hole in them; but the Egyptian skulls are so strong, that you may smite them with a stone and you will scarcely break them in. They gave me the following reason for this difference, which seemed to me likely enough:- The Egyptians (they said) from early childhood have the head shaved, and so by the action of the sun the skull becomes thick and hard. The same cause prevents baldness in Egypt, where you see fewer bald men than in any other land. Such, then, is the reason why the skulls of the Egyptians are so strong. The Persians, on the other hand, have feeble skulls, because they keep themselves shaded from the first, wearing turbans upon their heads. What I have here mentioned I saw with my own eyes, and I observed also the like at Papremis, in the case of the Persians who were killed with Achaeamenes, the son of Darius, by Inarus the Libyan.

It is inconceivable that Xerxes could have brought 1,700,000 men with him across the Hellespont. But in book seven, Herodotus falsifies this number and then substantiates it with another invention.

[7.60] What the exact number of the troops of each nation was I cannot say with certainty - for it is not mentioned by any one - but the whole land army together was found to amount to one million seven hundred thousand men. The manner in which the numbering took place was the following. A body of ten thousand men was brought to a certain place, and the men were made to stand as close together as possible; after which a circle was drawn around them, and the men were let go: then where the circle had been, a fence was built about the height of a man's middle; and the enclosure was filled continually with fresh troops, till the whole army had in this way been numbered. When the numbering was over, the troops were drawn up according to their several nations.

When he introduces the story about the three *Persians* engaged in a Greek debate as to which mode of government, oligarchy, democracy, or monarchy, was superior, Herodotus remarks:

[3.80] And now when five days were gone, and the hubbub had settled down, the conspirators met together to consult about the situation of affairs. At this meeting speeches were made, to which many of the Greeks give no credence, but they were made nevertheless...

Knowing that the Greek give no credit to the story, Herodotus will relate them anyway ⁱ

Word barbarian as used by Herodotus

Notwithstanding his personal views, Herodotus use of the word **Barbarian** is not a derogatory remark. Here I have some random extract from *Herodotus' Historiês* and how he used the word "*barbarian*" as non-Greek language or culture, for Persians and others equally. (all italic and bold is mine).

[Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, George Rawlinson, tr., vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), Book 1; and vol. 2, book 3].

[1.57] What the language of the Pelasgi was I cannot say with any certainty. If, however, we may form a conjecture from the tongue spoken by the Pelasgi of the present day, - those, for instance, who live at Creston above the Tyrrhenians, who formerly dwelt in the district named Thessalotis, and were neighbours of the people now called the Dorians, or those again who founded Placia and Scylace upon the Hellespont, who had previously dwelt for some time with the Athenians, - or those, in short, of any other of the cities which have dropped the name but are in fact Pelasgian; if, I say, we are to form a conjecture from any of these, we must pronounce that the Pelasgi spoke a *barbarous* language. If this were really so, and the entire Pelasgic race spoke the same tongue, the Athenians, who were certainly Pelasgi, must have changed their language at the same time that they passed into the Hellenic body; for it is a certain fact that the people of Creston speak a language unlike any of their neighbours, and the same is true of the Placianians, while the language spoken by these two people is the same; which shows that they both retain the idiom which they brought with them into the countries where they are now settled.

[1.58] The Hellenic race has never, since its first origin, changed its speech. This at least seems evident to me. It was a branch of the Pelasgic, which separated from the main body and at first, was scanty in numbers and of little power; but it gradually spread and increased to a multitude of nations, chiefly by the voluntary entrance into its ranks of numerous tribes of *barbarians*. The Pelasgi, on the other hand, were, as I think, a *barbarian* race which never greatly multiplied.

In Urania, He used the word *barbarian* and *Persian* synonymously

8.8] Now the *Persians* had with them a man named Scyllias, a native of Scione, who was the most expert diver of his day. At the time of the shipwreck off Mount Pelion he had recovered for the Persians a great part of what they lost; and at the same time he had taken care to obtain for himself a good share of the treasure. He had for some time been wishing to go over to the Greeks; but no good opportunity had offered till now, when the *Persians* were making the muster of their ships. In what way he contrived to reach the Greeks I am not able to say for certain: I marvel much if the tale that is commonly told be true. 'Tis said he dived into the sea at Aphetæ, and did not once come to the surface till he reached Artemisium, a distance of nearly eighty furlongs. Now many things are related of this man which are plainly false; but some of the stories seem to be true. My own opinion is that on this occasion he made the passage to Artemisium in a boat.

[8.9] So the Greeks on receiving these tidings held a council, whereat, after much debate, it was resolved that they should stay quiet for the present where they were, and remain at their moorings, but that after midnight they should put out to sea, and encounter the ships which were on their way round the island. Later in the day, when they found that no one meddled with them, they formed a new plan, which was to wait till near evening, and then sail out against the main body of the *barbarians*, for the purpose of trying their mode of fight and skill in manoeuvring.

8.10] When the *Persian* commanders and crews saw the Greeks thus boldly sailing towards them with their few ships, they thought them possessed with madness, and went out to meet them, expecting (as indeed seemed likely enough) that they would take all their vessels with the greatest ease

[8.11] The Greeks, at a signal, brought the sterns of their ships together into a small compass, and turned their prows on every side towards the barbarians; after which, at a second signal, although inclosed within a narrow space, and closely pressed upon by the foe, yet they fell bravely to work, and captured thirty ships of the *barbarians*, at the same time taking prisoner Philaon, the son of Chersis, and brother of Gorgus king of Salamis, a man of much repute in the fleet.

[8.12] Evening had barely closed in when a heavy rain - it was about midsummer - began to fall, which continued the whole night, with terrible thunderings and lightnings from Mount Pelion: the bodies of the slain and the broken pieces of the

damaged ships were drifted in the direction of Aphetæ, and floated about the prows of the vessels there, disturbing the action of the oars. The *barbarians*, hearing the storm, were greatly dismayed, expecting certainly to perish, as they had fallen into such a multitude of misfortunes. For before they were well recovered from the tempest and the wreck of their vessels off Mount Pelion, they had been surprised by a sea-fight which had taxed all their strength, and now the sea-fight was scarcely over when they were exposed to floods of rain, and the rush of swollen streams into the sea, and violent thunderings.

[8.13] If, however, they who lay at Aphetæ passed a comfortless night, far worse were the sufferings of those who had been sent to make the circuit of Eubœa; inasmuch as the storm fell on them out at sea, whereby the issue was indeed calamitous. They were sailing along near the Hollows of Eubœa, when the wind began to rise and the rain to pour: overpowered by the force of the gale, and driven they knew not whither, at the last they fell upon rocks - Heaven so contriving, in order that the *Persian* fleet might not greatly exceed the Greek, but be brought nearly to its level. This squadron, therefore, was entirely lost about the Hollows of Eubœa.

[8.14] The *barbarians* at Aphetæ were glad when day dawned, and remained in quiet at their station, content if they might enjoy a little peace after so many sufferings. Meanwhile there came to the aid of the Greeks a reinforcement of fifty-three ships from Attica. Their arrival, and the news (which reached Artemisium about the same time) of the complete destruction by the storm of the ships sent to sail round Eubœa, greatly cheered the spirits of the Greek sailors. So they waited again till the same hour as the day before, and, once more putting out to sea, attacked the enemy. This time they fell in with some Cilician vessels, which they sank; when night came on, they withdrew to Artemisium.

[8.15] The third day was now come, and the captains of the *barbarians*, ashamed that so small a number of ships should harass their fleet, and afraid of the anger of Xerxes, instead of waiting for the others to begin the battle, weighed anchor themselves, and advanced against the Greeks about the hour of noon, with shouts encouraging one another. Now it happened that these sea-fights took place on the very same days with the combats at Thermopylæ; and as the aim of the struggle was in the one case to maintain the pass, so in the other it was to defend the Euripus. While the Greeks, therefore, exhorted one another not to let the *barbarians* burst in upon Greece, these latter shouted to their fellows to destroy the Grecian fleet, and get possession of the channel.

[8.16] And now the fleet of Xerxes advanced in good order to the attack, while the Greeks on their side remained quite motionless at Artemisium. The *Persians* therefore spread themselves, and came forward in a half-moon, seeking to encircle the Greeks on all sides, and thereby prevent them from escaping. The Greeks, when they saw this, sailed out to meet their assailants; and the battle forthwith began. In this engagement the two fleets contended with no clear advantage to either - for the armament of Xerxes injured itself by its own greatness, the vessels falling into disorder, and oft-times running foul of one another; yet still they did not give way, but made a stout fight, since the crews felt it would indeed be a disgrace to turn and fly from a fleet so inferior in number. The Greeks therefore suffered much, both in ships and men; but the *barbarians* experienced a far larger loss of each. So the fleets separated after such a combat as I have described.

In Calliope

The number of the *barbarians*, as I have already mentioned, was three hundred thousand; that of the Greeks who had made alliance with Mardonius is known to none, for they were never counted: I should guess that they mustered near fifty thousand.

[8.98] The *Persian* Messenger System

Nothing mortal travels as fast as these *Persian* messengers. The entire plan is a *Persian* invention, and this is how it works. Along the whole course of road there are men stationed with horses, in numbers equal to the number of days which the journey takes, one man and horse for each day. These men will not be stopped from covering the distance they have to go at top speed--not by snow, or rain, or heat, or the darkness of night. The first rider delivers his messages to the second and the second passes it to the third. It passes from hand to hand along the whole route, like the light in the torch-race, which the Greeks celebrate to Hephaestus [god of the forge].

Summary and conclusion

I have shown that Herodotus never meant the word "*barbarian*" as a derogatory comment as it is so often used today, but simply as a means of distinguishing non Greek speaking people from Greeks.

We should remember that today's meaning of the word, after hundred of years of linguistic change, represent a different concept, which Herodotus could not possibly be aware of, but is too often misused by modern speakers and writers.

It's understandable that readers of any translated book without a command of the original language, can be easily misled by irresponsible translators. However, repeating the same misinterpretation by scholars like Mr. Milani, only confirm the original mistaken translation and is simply unacceptable. My intention has been to reverse this old misconception and facilitate comprehension of the word barbaros, as it was originally intended by Herodotus.

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