

The Imprint of Language in Herodotus' *Histories*

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**Introduction: Herodotus, Politics, and Language**

Herodotus' *Histories* are not just expansive, but also "omnivorous"<sup>1</sup> encompassing diverse topics, from Herodotus' self-proclaimed focus on the great deeds of Greeks and barbarians, to digressive details about the natural world, the peoples who inhabit that world, and the "often controversial"<sup>2</sup> political stance Herodotus takes by valorizing the actions of certain Greek city-states like Athens, while denigrating others. The *Histories* are not an apolitical text; not only do they contain Herodotus' internalized cultural assumptions, but they accomplish specific political work during the moment in history in which they were published. In Herodotus' day, the Athenians were using the narrative of their prominent role in the victory against the Persians to "justify their empire."<sup>3</sup> Herodotus' historical project often contributes to that justification through its depiction of cultural and political relations between different Greek city-states, and between those city-states and the other nations of the ancient Mediterranean as inherently unequal in their division of power. In this way, the *Histories* can be seen as a political project themselves; by appealing to his Athenian audience through the pro-Athenian political lens with which he views historical events, Herodotus presents a subjective historical account with obvious bias and an obviously present – if not necessarily clear – authorial perspective.

Not only are Herodotus' *Histories* subject to political bias in terms of how Herodotus deals with political topics like the role of Athens as a military power in the Persian War, but the political positions Herodotus communicates can also be read in seemingly apolitical content, including his elaborate cultural digressions. In particular, Herodotus incorporates information

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas 2007, ix

<sup>2</sup> Thomas 2007, xiv

<sup>3</sup> Thomas 2007, xiv

about the relationship between language and culture into his narrative in a way that demonstrates Herodotus' loyalty to the growing power in Athens, and shows that Herodotus saw a connection between the maintenance of cultural power within Greek city-states and the consolidation of city-states into more powerful inter-state unions. This connection, implicit in Herodotus' accounts of language use in different cultural, ethnic, and political groups, lies in the way Herodotus sees language as a resource from which tools for acquiring, maintaining, and subverting power can be crafted. To show Herodotus' incorporation of language into his narrative, I will examine three significant episodes from the first two books of Herodotus' *Histories* that demonstrate how Herodotus portrayed a relationship between power and linguistic change.

### **Herodotus' Pelasgians: Language and Ethnic Change**

Early in the course of the first book of his *Histories* (1.57-1.58), Herodotus provides an ethnographic-historical digression concerning an *ethnos* he refers to as "the Pelasgians." These Pelasgian people, Herodotus describes, did not speak Greek, but they lived in Greece in the past, and over time they contributed to the size and power of the 'Greek' ethnic group as a whole. Herodotus introduces this initial summary of the Pelasgians with a statement of his own lack of certainty regarding what language the Pelasgians spoke (1.57.1). "I cannot say precisely," Herodotus admits, "which language the Pelasgians spoke" (ἤντινα δὲ γλῶσσαν ἴεσαν οἱ Πελασγοί, οὐκ ἔχω ἀτρεκέως εἰπεῖν, 1.57.1). By acknowledging that he cannot know "precisely" (ἀτρεκέως) what language the Pelasgians used, Herodotus frames his inquiry into the Pelasgians as an interpretation of evidence: first, he warns his audience that they will be entering

the realms of conjecture, then he examines the evidence of contemporary Pelasgian communities. In Herodotus' own time, he tells us, these communities included both those Pelasgians "who lived with the Athenians" (οἱ σύνοικοι ἐγένοντο Ἀθηναίοισι, 1.57.2) in previous times, and then had moved away from Athens, and "other Pelasgians" who lived in communities with non-Pelasgians, and, as a result had "changed their name" (τὸ οὖνομα μετέβαλε, 1.57.2) so that they were no longer called "Pelasgians." Between these two contemporary Pelasgian groups, Herodotus depicts the *ethnos* as having undergone a radical change. Whereas the historical Pelasgians all spoke the same language – whatever language that might have been – and shared the same name ("Pelasgian"), the modern Pelasgians have splintered into some who seem to have retain their ethnic title but lost their geographic home, and others who retained their original territory but lost their name. This narrative of fracturing enables Herodotus to draw a contrast between the historical and contemporary Pelasgians not only in terms of geography and ethnic name, but also in regards to their language: although Herodotus initially only implies that some contemporary Pelasgians speak a Greek language, his primary initial assertion is that "The Pelasgians spoke a barbarian language" (ἦσαν οἱ Πελασγοὶ βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν ἰέντες, 1.57.2).

Herodotus marks out this evidence-based argument through a chiasmic logical structure. He begins with his question "which language?" (ἦντινα... γλῶσσαν, 1.57.1), and then warns that he is departing from objective fact with that adverb "precisely" (ἀτρεκέως, 1.57.1).<sup>4</sup> Once he has listed out the contemporary communities he has examined as evidence, Herodotus reminds the audience that his argument is conjectural by including the conditional phrase "if it is necessary to speak, having judged from these things" (εἰ τούτοισι τεκμαιρόμενον δεῖ λέγειν). He then

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<sup>4</sup> LSJ, s.v. "ἀτρεκής" provides "accurately," "precisely," and "tell truly, exactly" (II).

concludes by answering his initial question: “Which language” (ἤντινα... γλῶσσαν)<sup>5</sup> did the Pelasgians “speak” (ἔεσαν)<sup>6</sup>? They “spoke” (ἤσαν ἰέντες)<sup>7</sup> a “barbarian tongue” (βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν).<sup>8</sup> Herodotus uses the same verb, ἴημι, at both the beginning and end of the argument, in order to round out his reasoning for the changing relationship between Pelasgian language, culture, and geographic location over time. The verb ἴημι, meaning “release, let go”<sup>9</sup> and therefore “utter,” or “speak,”<sup>10</sup> is used relatively rarely by Herodotus when talking about language in his *Histories*: only four times in the text does ἴημι appear as the verb governing a ‘language noun,’<sup>11</sup> and in the other two instances outside of 1.57, the ‘language noun’ is not γλῶσσα, meaning “tongue, language,”<sup>12</sup> but φωνή, meaning “sound, language.”<sup>13</sup> In contrast to

<sup>5</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ὅστις” a relative pronoun, here “in indirect questions” (III); s.v. “γλῶσσα” has “language” (II).

<sup>6</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἴημι” gives the definition “of sounds, utter,” both specifically “to speak Greek,” and more generally “to let loose every kind of speech” (A.2).

<sup>7</sup> LSJ, s.v. “εἶμι” has “be” (B.2); s.v. “ἴημι” gives the definition “of sounds, utter,” both specifically “to speak Greek,” and more generally “to let loose every kind of speech” (A.2).

<sup>8</sup> LSJ, s.v. “βάρβαρος” gives generally “barbarous, i.e. non-Greek, foreign” (A) and specifies that is used “esp[ecially] of language” (A.2); s.v. “γλῶσσα” has “language” (II).

<sup>9</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἴημι” has “release, let go,” as well as “let fall” and “let themselves go” (A.1).

<sup>10</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἴημι” gives the definition “of sounds, utter,” both specifically “to speak Greek,” and more generally “to let loose every kind of speech” (A.2).

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this paper, a ‘language noun’ is any noun that refers to language (such as γλῶσσα), writing (such as γράμμα), or speech (such as φωνή), as well as to groups of people described by their language use (such as ὁμόγλωσσος, βάρβαρος). The four usages of ἴημι governing ‘language nouns’ in Herodotus occur at 1.57.1, 1.57.2, 2.2.2 and 4.23.2.

<sup>12</sup> LSJ, s.v. “γλῶσσα,” for which the primary definition is “*tongue*, as the organ of speech” (A.2), and “language” also appears as a frequent definition (II).

<sup>13</sup> LSJ, s.v. “φωνή,” which is defined primarily as “sound, tone” or, properly, “the sound of the voice” (A). Other definitions include “speech, voice, utterance” (A.I), and “any articulate sound,” (A.I.3), and only peripherally as “faculty of speech, discourse” (A.II) or “language” (A.II.2). Herodotus uses it fairly often to refer to the speech practices of various *ethnē*: φωνή appears in the *Histories* 32 times (only once in the nominative, nine times in the genitive, six times in the dative, and sixteen times in the accusative). The one nominative use (4.129.1) and several uses in other cases refer to animals noises, but two uses in the genitive (2.32.6, 8.65.1), three uses in the dative (4.117.1, 5.58.1, 7.85.1), and fourteen uses in the accusative (1.85.4, 1.159.3, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.42.4, 4.23.2, 4.111.1, 4.114.1, twice in 4.155.3, 5.93.2, 7.70.1, 8.65.1, 8.65.4) refer to human language use in some way.

the wide semantic breadth of φωνή, which can be used of non-language and non-human sounds,<sup>14</sup> Herodotus uses γλῶσσα to refer only to human organs of speech and speech practices. Apart from one participial usage in the ninth book,<sup>15</sup> the only two times ἴημι takes the direct object γλῶσσα in Herodotus' narrative are at the beginning and the end of this short logical argument in 1.57.2.<sup>16</sup> By selecting these paired terms, Herodotus guides his audience to the conclusion that his evidence concerning the languages spoken by the Pelasgians during his own time can be used to assert truths about the language spoken by the Pelasgians in the past. At this point, Herodotus has begun charting linguistic change.

Having asserted that the Pelasgians once spoke a barbarian language, Herodotus then articulates how he believes the Pelasgians' use of their language must have changed over time. First, he deals with those "other Pelasgians" who lived in communities with others but had "changed their name" (τὸ οὔνομα μετέβαλε, 1.57.2) – specifically, the Pelasgians who had remained in Attica and lost the title "Pelasgian" in favor of retaining their original territory, thus becoming part of the Athenian city-state and the Athenian *ethnos*. Of these former Pelasgians, Herodotus says that they underwent a "change to Hellenes" (τῆ μεταβολῆ τῆ ἐς Ἑλλήνας, 1.57.3) and, seemingly in this process, "they changed the language they learned" (τὴν γλῶσσαν

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<sup>14</sup> φωνή is used to refer to the sounds made by donkeys and mules (4.129.1, twice in 4.129.3, 4.135.3), pigs (twice in 2.70.2), and horses and hippopotami (2.71.1), as well as to the words spoken by two black doves (δύο πελειάδας μελαίνας, 2.55.1); although animals, these doves speak "human speech" (φωνῆ ἀνθρωπική, 2.55.2, and twice in 2.57.2). The verb used to refer to these doves' speech is unusual as well: ἀυδάξασθαι, from ἀυδάζομαι, which appears only in these two accounts of the doves' speech, within the entirety of the *Histories*.

<sup>15</sup> The participial aside is the phrase "speaking the Greek language," said of a Persian man conversing with Thersander (Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν ἰέντα, 9.16.2).

<sup>16</sup> For additional reference about which other verbs govern nouns of language, see "Appendix I: Verbs of Language in Herodotus, Organized by Passage in Text" and "Appendix II: Verbs of Language in Herodotus, Organized Alphabetically by Main Verb" at the end of this document for tables containing additional data about the correspondences between specific verbs and nouns related to language use in Herodotus' *Histories*.

μετέμαθε, 1.57.3). When articulating this significant linguistic change, Herodotus uses a verb seen nowhere else in the *Histories*: μετέμαθε, from μεταμανθάνω, “to learn differently; unlearn one language and learn another.”<sup>17</sup> What μεταμανθάνω accomplishes is a vivid repetition of sound from the initial description of the Pelasgians who “changed” (μετέβαλε,<sup>18</sup> 1.57.2) their name, to those who now experience a “change” (μεταβολή,<sup>19</sup> 1.57.3) of ethnic title, just as they “changed” (μετέμαθε, 1.57.3) their language. This repetition of “change” (μετα-) highlights that, according to Herodotus’ account, the ‘Athenian Pelasgians’ have undergone a rapid and radical cultural shift: although they have retained their original homeland, nearly every other feature (indeed, every feature that Herodotus records) of their culture has shifted. They no longer hold the same name for themselves, nor do they speak the same language.

Herodotus then draws a contrast with the Pelasgian groups who have experienced far less cultural change. Of the Pelasgians living in other regions besides Attica, Herodotus says that “they are not now of the same language as their [non-Pelasgian] neighbors” (οὐδαμοῖσι τῶν νῦν σφέας περιουκεόντων εἰσι ὁμόγλωσσοι, 1.57.3). These disparate contemporary Pelasgian groups, however, are “of the same language with each other” (σφίσι δὲ ὁμόγλωσσοι,<sup>20</sup> 1.57.3). It is this evidence that forms the root of Herodotus’ argument that the original language of the Pelasgians was a barbarian one, but the barbarian nature of the historical Pelasgian language is no longer Herodotus’ main thesis: that conclusion has been reached at the end of the ἦμι γλῶσσα chiasmic

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<sup>17</sup> LSJ, s.v. “μεταμανθάνω” has “learn differently,” and of language, “unlearn one language and learn another instead,” citing this passage (A).

<sup>18</sup> LSJ, s.v. “μεταβάλλω” has “turn about, change, alter” (II).

<sup>19</sup> LSJ, s.v. “μεταβολή” has “change, changing” (A).

<sup>20</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ὁμόγλωσσος” provides the definition “speaking the same tongue,” (A) and cites both this passage and Hdt. 8.144

structure in 1.57.2. Now, Herodotus is more concerned with explicating the distinction between the Pelasgian communities who experienced radical internal change and those who did not. He concludes his illustration of the contemporary Pelasgian communities who have a different language from their neighbors by articulating even more explicitly that these communities are subject to less linguistic change. The one change they have undergone – their geographic change – is again marked out with a “change” (μετα-) word, when Herodotus describes the circumstances of their differentiation from the other Pelasgians as “passing over into these lands” (μεταβαίνοντες ἐς ταῦτα τὰ χωρία,<sup>21</sup> 1.57.3). The parts of this passage that discuss language, in contrast, show a marked stasis: because these communities have retained their language, that language itself has retained its original, unchanged form. Herodotus says that these Pelasgians “carried the imprint of their language” with them to their new homes (τὸν ἠνείκαντο γλώσσης χαρακτῆρα, 1.57.3), and, furthermore, that they held this imprint “under guard” (τοῦτον ἔχουσι ἐν φυλακῇ,<sup>22</sup> 1.57.3) as though protecting it from some enemy. The word Herodotus uses to describe this specific usage of the language, χαρακτήρ, has been translated simply as ‘variant,’<sup>23</sup> but it originally referred to the “mark[s] engraved, impress[ed], stamp[ed] on coins and seals.”<sup>24</sup> This usage, in 1.57.3, is cited as metaphorical, used to indicate a “distinctive mark or token

<sup>21</sup> LSJ, s.v. “μεταβαίνω” gives “pass over from one place to another” (A).

<sup>22</sup> LSJ, s.v. “φυλακή” gives “a watching, guarding, keeping, preserving,” and in Herodotus in particular the formula ἔχειν ἐν φυλακῇ τινά, meaning “to keep guarded or occupied” (II). This phrase appears eleven times in Herodotus, including here; the other ten usages (1.24.7, 1.160.4, 2.99.3, 3.152.1, 5.77.3, 7.203.1, 7.207.1, 7.208.2, 8.23.1, and 8.40.2) all refer to physical actions of guarding or keeping watch over some imprisoned person, material object, or military position. This use, in 1.57.3, is the only truly metaphorical use in the *Histories*.

<sup>23</sup> see, for instance, the 2007 translation by Rosalind Thomas (the introduction to which is cited as Thomas 2007)

<sup>24</sup> LSJ, s.v. “χαρακτήρ” (II). The first definitions given actually indicate the tools used to make an engraved mark or even the person accomplishing the engraving: “engraver,” or “one who mints coins” (A) as well as “graving tool” (A.2), “die, stamp” (A.3), and “branding-iron” (A.4).

impressed (as it were) on a person or thing, by which it is known from others,” or, in other words, the “characteristic,” or “character” of “a particular dialect.”<sup>25</sup> This metaphorical usage of a predominantly material term shows that, for Herodotus, language usage was comparable to the use of more typical or more material tools.

In 1.58.1, Herodotus returns to the case of the ‘Athenian Pelasgians’ by stating that the Pelasgians and many other barbarian tribes “became like to” the Hellenes (Πελασγῶν μάλιστα προσκεχωρηκότων αὐτῷ καὶ ἄλλων ἐθνέων βαρβάρων συχῶν). In this context, the specific phrase “became like to” (προσκεχωρηκότων αὐτῷ)<sup>26</sup> “implies hellenization or a transformation of all things linguistic.”<sup>27</sup> This hellenization is accomplished through the action of linguistic shift itself; the Pelasgians become part of the Hellenic *ethnos* by assimilating to the dominant language. By asserting that the ‘Athenian Pelasgians,’ changed their language use, Herodotus reverses one of his usual patterns. When analyzing the manner in which Herodotus talks about cultural similarities, Munson says that “As a rule, similarities between different ethnic groups are taken [by Herodotus] as a sign of mutual contact, common origin, or borrowing.”<sup>28</sup> In this case, the assimilation of the Pelasgians into the Athenian *ethnos* can be seen as a process of growing social similarity through mutual contact. Regarding the directionality of this borrowing, however, Munson also observes that “Herodotus points out the debt of the Greeks toward various

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<sup>25</sup> LSJ, s.v. “χαρακτήρ” (II.3).

<sup>26</sup> LSJ, s.v. “προσχωρέω” gives “approach, i.e. agree with, be like” (II.3).

<sup>27</sup> Asheri et.al. 2007, 119

<sup>28</sup> Munson 2001, 92

barbarian nations much more frequently than the other way around”<sup>29</sup> Yet in this case, it is the barbarian historical Pelasgians who ‘borrow’ the Greek language from the Hellenes.

It is the reversal of Herodotus’ usual pattern of barbarian-to-Greek borrowing that alerts us to the political work underlying Herodotus’ ethnographic and linguistic narrative. When analyzing this episode, Van Wees observes the political implications of how Herodotus depicts the mutual contact:

The cumulative effect of the many passages which attribute non-Greek origins to Greek communities... leaves little doubt that one of Herodotus’ aims in investigating origins was to prove a point which he made in his opening discussion of the Greeks as a nation: that they were once ‘weak’ and grew in numbers and power only because their ranks were swelled by ‘Pelasgians and numerous other barbarian peoples’ (1.58).<sup>30</sup>

Herodotus does clearly assert that the Hellenes of Attica were initially “weak” (ἀσθενές,<sup>31</sup> 1.58.1) and only grew powerful as a result of their assimilation with the Pelasgians and other barbarians. However, Herodotus shows that it is the power of language that enables that Hellenic growth and empowerment. Herodotus says that “it is clear” to him (καταφαίνεται εἶναι,<sup>32</sup> 1.58.1) that the Hellenes have “used the same language” since their beginnings (γλώσση μὲν ἐπεῖτε ἐγένετο αἰεὶ κοτὲ τῆ αὐτῆ διαχρᾶται, 1.58.1). The verb Herodotus uses to refer to the “use” of language by the Hellenes is not the same word, ἴημι, meaning “release, let go”<sup>33</sup> and therefore

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<sup>29</sup> Munson 2001, 92

<sup>30</sup> Van Wees 2002, 327-328

<sup>31</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἀσθενής,” defined as “without strength, weak” (A).

<sup>32</sup> LSJ, s.v. “καταφαίνω” gives “to be clear, plain” (II.2).

<sup>33</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἴημι” has “release, let go,” as well as “let fall” and “let themselves go” (A.1).

“utter,” or “speak,”<sup>34</sup> that Herodotus uses elsewhere in the passage; instead, Herodotus describes the Hellenes’ language use as a “practice,” using the word διαχρᾶται, from διαχράομαι, meaning “use constantly or habitually” – a usage found chiefly in Herodotus.<sup>35</sup> By changing the verb from a word of single-time action (uttering, ἴημι) to a word of repeated action (using, διαχράομαι), Herodotus portrays the Hellenic ethnos as more permanent and stable in the character of its language, and, by extension, its culture.

In contrast, Herodotus asserts, in the conclusion of his argument, that the contemporary Pelasgians, “being a barbarian people” (ἐὸν βάρβαρον, 1.58.1) never experienced the same type of growth that the Hellenes of Attica did. For the Hellenes, maintaining their original language was a beneficial political move, because they were able to draw other groups into their linguistic community, ultimately developing a dominant language. For the Pelasgians, maintaining their original language actually held back their cultural growth, according to Herodotus. From these different cases, we can see that it is not language change (or lack thereof) that Herodotus sees as the primary political benefit of a community’s language practice, but rather allegiance to the dominant language, whether their own language originally or not. Undergirding Herodotus’ contrast between Athenian success through language preservation and Pelasgian failure is a nascent idea of Athenian – or, at the very least, Hellenic – supremacy over the Pelasgians and other barbarians.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> LSJ, s.v. “ἴημι” gives the definition “of sounds, utter,” both specifically “to speak Greek,” and more generally “to let loose every kind of speech” (A.2).

<sup>35</sup> LSJ, s.v. “διαχράομαι” (I).

<sup>36</sup> Scholarship concerning the portrayal of barbarians in Herodotus’ *Histories* is vast: see, in particular, Hall 1996, Hall 2002, Hartog 1988, Kim 2013, Munson 2001, Skinner 2012, Van Wees 2002.

### The Pelasgians' Violence: Women and Language

Herodotus returns to the question of the Pelasgians as a cultural group in the sixth book of the *Histories*. Because of this great distance between the two Pelasgian episodes, the exact circumstances of the cultural change that certain groups of Pelasgians undergo has often become muddled. Sourvinou-Inwood<sup>37</sup> observes that previous scholarship has seen a marked dissonance between how Herodotus depicts the Pelasgians as the ancestors/predecessors of the Hellenes (1.57-8) and the later narrative Herodotus relates about the capture and murder of Athenian women by the Pelasgians of Lemnos (6.137-139). Scholars have struggled to reconcile the differences between these two groups that hold the same name: 'Pelasgian.' In part, this may be because, despite the large separation in the narrative between the two episodes and the large chronological gap between the time periods Herodotus describes, the themes present in the two accounts are very similar, a fact which have led to the scholarly confusion Sourvinou-Inwood identifies. In Herodotus' second reference to the Pelasgians (6.137-139) the ideas of language and culture are again inextricably connected: when a number of Athenian women are abducted and raped by Pelasgian men, they resist their circumstances by teaching their children the Attic Greek language, as well as other Athenian customs (γλῶσσαν τε τὴν Ἀττικὴν καὶ τρόπους τοῦς Ἀθηναίων ἐδίδασκον τοὺς παῖδας, 6.138.2), thus disrupting their acculturation into their fathers' Lemnian *ethnos*. As a result of this subversive use of language education, the Athenian women and their children are killed by their captors. Although Herodotus relates this violent sequence mainly as an etiology for the idiomatic phrase "a Lemnian deed" as a proxy for any cruel act,

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<sup>37</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 105

Herodotus' account shows a set of assumptions about the power of language use – and language pedagogy – as a political tool.

As Sourvinou-Inwood argues, Herodotus has actually articulated the distinctions between the two 'Pelasgian' entities. "The Athenians had been Pelasgians in the past," Sourvinou-Inwood summarizes, "but then they became Greeks; not all Pelasgians had become Greeks, and of those people who continued to be Pelasgians, a segment [from Lemnos] came to live in Athens [and seized Athenian women to take back to Lemnos]."<sup>38</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood believes that this simple explanation evaded previous scholars because of a lack of attention paid to Herodotean "textual strategies," namely, his dialogic narrative style, and because of the inappropriate assumption that Herodotus and his contemporaries perceived ethnic identity as "a set, definable essence."<sup>39</sup> Underlying this confusion is the complex question of how Herodotus viewed cultural and linguistic change.

Not only was Greek identity of this time "destabilized" by the notion that barbarians could become Greeks, and vice versa,<sup>40</sup> but the institution of ethnicity was challenged by the tension between the innate, unchanging ideal of *physis* and the perceivable change in *nomoi*. The emphasis Herodotus places on the *nomos*, which Blok understands as "a custom of such impact as to function as a natural law within a community," means that "people's behavior is articulated in an ethnography in which gender-relations, and women's activities in particular, are among the cardinal criteria of description and evaluation."<sup>41</sup> The actions of the captive Athenian women are

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<sup>38</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 140

<sup>39</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 140

<sup>40</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 144

<sup>41</sup> Blok 2002, 227

so disruptive to the community of Pelasgians on Lemnos precisely because, by teaching an alternative language and other alternative *nomoi*, these women highlight the tension between *nomoi* as ‘functional’ natural law, and the actual physical law of *physis*.

### **Psammetichus’ Experiment: Nature, Nurture, and Violence**

The tension between *nomos* and *physis* in the *Histories* relates to the ways in which Herodotus talks about language. One episode that Herodotus recounts at the very beginning of the second book of the *Histories* (2.2.1-2.2.5) illuminates these contrasting assumptions underlying the Herodotean depiction of language. During this episode, Herodotus repeats an Egyptian account about a linguistic experiment conducted by one of the previous Egyptian pharaohs, a certain Psammetichus. According to the Egyptians themselves, Herodotus says, Psammetichus wanted to discover which cultural group was the first culture, so he designed a controlled experiment to test what language a child is most naturally inclined to speak. The process of Psammetichus’ experiment involved placing two infants under the care of a shepherd, who would be forbidden to speak to the children, and waiting to see if the children would produce some language of their own without being taught any linguistic practice. The first word spoken by these children was the word “bekos” (βεκός), which, Herodotus tells us, is the Phrygian word for bread.

The fact that Psammetichus searches for the answer to the question of the oldest or original people through language, rather than any other cultural trait, reveals that “[Psammetichus] has already made up his mind with respect to the underlying issue,” that the

answer to the question of origin of the human species lies with “the origin of human speech.”<sup>42</sup> For Herodotus’ Psammetichus, language is the ultimate dividing line between cultures, because language is a direct line running back to the origin of humanity itself. As Munson further explicates:

Psammetichus would not proceed as he does if he did not assume at the outset that innate to all men is not merely the potential for speech and communication, but also a specific primordial language... with ready-made original words signifying what most men have in common, such as bread.<sup>43</sup>

This seems to be a different model for language and language change than the types of language shift articulated in Herodotus’ narratives about the Pelasgians. If the Hellenes “used the same language” since their beginnings (γλώσση μὲν ἐπέιτε ἐγένετο αἰεὶ κοτε τῆ αὐτῆ διαχρᾶται, 1.58.1), then they cannot also have spoken the “specific primordial language” that Psammetichus assumes all peoples once spoke, unless that “specific primordial language” is Greek, but Herodotus gives us no indication that Greek is even a possibility, only Egyptian and Phrygian.

Following the Egyptian account of the language experiment, Herodotus records a second version of the story, from Greek sources, in which it is not a shepherd who is told to raise the children without language, but rather their own mothers, whose tongues have been removed to prevent them from breaking the no-language rule. Although Asheri et. al. present Psammetichus’ language experiment, as a type of “linguistic argument” which was “typical of 5th-cent. Greek anthropology,”<sup>44</sup> Munson, in contrast, observes this secondary, Greek account of the Psammetichus episode distances the Greeks from any credit in this type of linguistic theorizing.

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<sup>42</sup> Munson 2005, 20

<sup>43</sup> Munson 2005, 20-21

<sup>44</sup> Asheri et. al. 2007, 243

Munson says that, “to the experiment of Psammetichus as a positive, though imperfect, barbarian instance of *historie* in the narrative, the metanarrative juxtaposes a negative Greek one,” namely, the sequence in which Psammetichus cuts off the tongues of his servant women.<sup>45</sup> Here, Herodotus depicts the Greeks not as early linguistic anthropologists, but rather as gossip-mongers, who say “many frivolous things” (μάταια πολλὰ, 2.2.5), twisting the story of an originally Egyptian type of experiment into a stereotype about the violent barbarian. In fact, as Munson observes, the “power and inclination to undertake a controlled experiment” is, for better or worse, the prerogative only of individuals like Egyptian kings, not Greek researchers like Herodotus.<sup>46</sup> Munson points to Lloyd,<sup>47</sup> who outlines the “relative infrequency of controlled experiments in Greek science.”<sup>48</sup> As a result of the rarity of this sort of experiment within the overarching narrative of the *Histories*, Herodotus’ draws his audience’s attention to the peculiarity of the story itself.

Dewald observes that Herodotus often uses a correlative or a superlative, such as “first,” paired with the formulaic phrase *tôn hēmeis idmen*, meaning “which we know,” (τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν)<sup>49</sup> in order to indicate “that something is extraordinary, the first or best or most extreme in some way.”<sup>50</sup> When Herodotus uses this formula, Dewald argues, the cumulative effect is that

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<sup>45</sup> Munson 2005, 141

<sup>46</sup> Munson 2005, 19

<sup>47</sup> Lloyd 1966, 73-79

<sup>48</sup> Munson 2005, 19 n.1

<sup>49</sup> This exact formula is used 31 times in Herodotus’ *Histories* (1.6.2, 1.14.2, 1.23.1, 1.94.1, 1.142.1, 1.178.2, 1.193.2, 2.68.2, 2.157.1, 3.60.4, 3.94.2, 3.98.2, 3.122.2, 4.42.2, 4.46.2, 4.48.1, 4.58.1, 4.152.3, 4.184.1, 4.187.3, 5.119.2, 6.21.1, 6.112.3, 7.20.2, 7.27.2, 7.170.3, 8.105.1, 8.125.1, 9.37.2, 9.64.1, 9.78.2). A variant of this formula, ὅσον ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν, appears five times (4.17.2, 4.19.1, 4.21.1, 4.197.2, 7.111.1).

<sup>50</sup> Dewald 2002, 281

“the authorial judgement in play is one that is secular and social, not obtained as part of an unshakeable tradition or by divine fiat.”<sup>51</sup> At the beginning of the Psammetichus episode, however, Herodotus frames his account not as a factoid made more likely by its generic popularity, but rather as a historical truth, known from specific sources. We see the expected repetition of superlatives, in the repeated use of the word “first” (πρῶτος) – the Egyptians initially think themselves to be the first of all humans (πρώτους γενέσθαι πάντων ἀνθρώπων, 2.2.1), but Psammetichus wants to know who the true first people were (οἵτινες γενοῖατο πρῶτοι, 2.2.1) – but the formulaic phrase τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν does not appear. This absence shows that the narrative Herodotus presents is not merely a common story “which we [Greeks] know,” but rather a foreign account that is, in this case, backed up by an “unshakeable tradition”<sup>52</sup> – the written records maintained by the Egyptians.

The more assertive tone with which Herodotus presents this narrative is possible because Herodotus saw the Egyptians as particularly reliable sources for historical accounts, as a result of their particular historical usage of language. Herodotus, like other ancient authors, divides history into periods, and “the criterion on which different periods of historical time are distinguished is knowledge.”<sup>53</sup> In Herodotus’s case, this knowledge stretches further back in the case of Egypt because of the great antiquity of Egyptian record-keeping, resulting in Herodotus’s assessments in 2.2 and 2.154, that the Egyptians were, if not the first of all human beings, then at least among the earliest cultural groups, and that it is possible to know more of Egyptian history with certainty than it is possible to know of the history of other nations.

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<sup>51</sup> Dewald 2002, 282

<sup>52</sup> Dewald 2002, 282

<sup>53</sup> Cobet 2002, 406

This approach to the Egyptian records falls into the second type of the two types of research Herodotus conducted; according to Momigliano “Herodotus combined two types of historical research,” identifying these “two types” as (1) enquiry about the Persian war, a historical – if only recently historical – event, and (2) travel “in the East” and elsewhere in the Mediterranean in order “to collect information about present conditions and past events.”<sup>54</sup> Despite the very different products of these two types of research (specific military-focused narratives and separate context-providing digressions ranging from mythic to ethnographic), the methods Herodotus employed for each type of research must have been similar for the most part, Momigliano reminds us. As one of the earliest Greek history writers, Herodotus relied heavily on “sightseeing and the oral tradition”<sup>55</sup> in the absence of earlier written records. Herodotus’ task was therefore to take unwritten accounts and compile them into a written narrative. The fact that he implemented the oral tradition in both historical and ethnographic ways in his writing is a characteristic of Herodotus’ own narrative style rather than a natural expression of different types of research methodology.

The Egyptian Psammetichus episode, however, differs from Herodotus’ standard methodology in that it does rely on written records, and it is therefore set apart from both the oral historical and ethnographic types of stories present elsewhere in Herodotus’ narrative, including the Greek Psammetichus episode that directly follows, “frivolous thing” (μάταια πολλά, 2.2.5) that it is. Yet this narrative from written records explores a topic which is difficult to pin down: language. As Munson observes,

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<sup>54</sup> Momigliano 1958, 2

<sup>55</sup> Momigliano 1958, 3

In history, Herodotus can only productively inquire into events not too distant in time. In ethnography he focuses on current realities, such as the existence of many languages. Languages are, like other *nomoi*, mysterious in their origin but observable and synchronically comparable by one who studies differences and affinities among men in all areas of culture.<sup>56</sup>

In this way, Munson suggests that the Herodotean tension may be methodological: Herodotus struggles to reconcile the historical narratives he collects from others with the ethnographic data he himself perceives. Herodotus, however, may be sharing with his audience “the ironical awareness that Psammetichus’ experiment has a different meaning from that which the king attributes to it.”<sup>57</sup> One reading of Herodotus’ analysis would come to the conclusion not that Phrygian was truly the one original language, but that language, like any other *nomos*, was subject to change as a result of shifts in human society. Although Herodotus places value on Psammetichus’ experiment, the real innovation implicitly identified by Herodotus is Psammetichus’ questioning the traditional truth that the Egyptians are the oldest or first culture. This type of questioning supports the collection of evidence – a practice which Herodotus valorizes from among his strategies for historical research, particularly when investigating the anthropological patterns of *nomoi* as they are practiced by different *ethnê*.

The Psammetichus episode therefore complicates the Greek binary of *nomos* and *physis*. Corcella discusses the essential difference between *nomos* and *physis* for Herodotus: that “if difference among *nomoi* is the norm, the identity of the *nomoi* of two distinct peoples constitutes an exception, and therefore a potential problem... [which is] the opposite of what is seen in the realm of *physis*, where what behaves differently from the usual experience of a Greek constitutes

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<sup>56</sup> Munson 2005, 23

<sup>57</sup> Munson 2005, 21

a problem.”<sup>58</sup> The unique quality of a *nomos* is that it differs – or rather, *can* differ – between peoples, and this allows for the similarities and differences of groups to be charted by their *nomoi*, and thus for the historical development of groups to be charted. As Corcella asserts, “*nomoi* can thus be used for the *reconstruction of the past*.”<sup>59</sup> Both the Pelasgian episodes and Psammetichus’ language experiment show how Herodotus sees the use of language as a *nomos* with which he can reconstruct the past – and more specifically, he can reconstruct past relationships and power balances between different cultures.

### **The Ionians’ Dialects: Language, Dialect, and Disorder**

Herodotus’ incorporation of language as a *nomos* in his narrative, like his portrayal of other *nomoi*, shows that, for Herodotus, language can be one of the customs by which cultural units are constituted and framed. For instance, in his description of the diversity of Ionian dialects, Herodotus’ specific word choices suggest that he believes the Ionians’ lack of a single shared language is not just a symptom of their greater political disunity, but part of a larger cultural failure to maintain power. In the first book of the *Histories*, Herodotus says that the Ionians “do not [all] practice the same language” (γλῶσσαν δὲ οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν οὗτοι νενομίκασι, 1.142.3). The verb Herodotus uses to describe the language-based practices of the Ionians highlights that, here, Herodotus is talking about language as a *nomos*: this verb is νενομίκασι, “to use customarily, practise; to have a language in common use,”<sup>60</sup> from the verb νομίζω, which shares a root with *nomos* (νόμος).

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<sup>58</sup> Corcella 2013, 75

<sup>59</sup> Corcella 2013, 77, italics in original.

<sup>60</sup> LSJ s.v. “νομίζω” (A).

Rather than all speaking the same language, the Ionians, according to Herodotus, use a number of dialects. When introducing this idea of dialects as separate languages with some shared elements,<sup>61</sup> Herodotus claims that Ionians use not one language “but four customs of variation,” (ἀλλὰ τρόπους τέσσερας παραγωγέων,<sup>62</sup> 1.142.3). This word usage suggests that Herodotus held a low opinion of the Ionians. The term παραγωγή (1.142.3), meaning “variation,” is, in this context, a “pejorative term”<sup>63</sup> with a range of definitions including “leading astray, misleading” in addition to its use here as a variant term for ‘dialect.’<sup>64</sup> The only other instance in which Herodotus uses the term παραγωγή occurs not in a language context, but rather a social context that reinforces its negative connotations: Herodotus, in his account of the Spartan man Agetus and the Spartan king Ariston, says that Agetus was forced to give up his wife to Ariston “by means of a misleading from the trick” that Ariston had played on him (τῆς ἀπάτης τῆ παραγωγῆ, 6.62.2). By framing the language use of the Ionians in these negative terms, Herodotus is asserting that Ionians would be better situated to consolidate power and maintain cultural unity if they used the same language and had not been ‘led astray’ from it through the use of regional dialects.

Herodotus then describes these four ‘speech communities’ in Ionia: (1) the Carians, (2) the Lydians, (3) the Chians and Erythraians, and (4) the Samians. After he has introduced the first two groups by listing the cities in each region, he pauses his catalogue to comment again on

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<sup>61</sup> And perhaps also a shared history, if we are to understand Herodotus as incorporating the idea of a dialect into a model of linguistic change in this case.

<sup>62</sup> LSJ, s.v. “τρόπος” gives “a way of life, habit, custom” (III).

<sup>63</sup> Asheri et. al. 2007, 179

<sup>64</sup> LSJ, s.v. “παραγωγή” where “leading astray, misleading” is given (II), as well as the more specific “variation of dialect,” for which only this passage is cited (II.3).

the differences of their language usage: Herodotus articulates that the Lydians are not of the same language group as the Carians. The residents of the Lydian cities, who do share a similar practice of language use, however, are not “of the same language,” according to Herodotus, in quite the same way as the groups of contemporary Pelasgians whom Herodotus had previously described; those Pelasgian groups are “of the same language” (ὁμόγλωσσοι, 1.57.3) where the root used for “language” is γλῶσσα (“tongue, language”).<sup>65</sup> The groups of Ionians in Lydia, in contrast, “speak the same speech” (σφισι δὲ ὁμοφώνεουσι, 1.142.4); the term Herodotus uses, ὁμοφώνεουσι, comes from the other primary word for “language,” φωνή (“sound, language”).<sup>66</sup> Not only do they speak “nothing from the language” of the first Ionian group that Herodotus described (τῆσι πρότερον λεχθείησι ὁμολογέουσι κατὰ γλῶσσαν οὐδέν, 1.142.4), but the speech that they do hold in common is not a language, but merely a sound, an utterance (φωνή), disconnected from the tongue itself (γλῶσσα). The way Herodotus portrays linguistic diversity – or rather, divergence – in Ionia has distinct political implications. Asheri et.al. suggest that Herodotus crafted this account of Ionian linguistic diversity in 1.142 in order “to emphasize the Ionians’ lack of unity in all areas: language, ethnicity, politics, etc.”<sup>67</sup> According to Strassler, this emphasis of Herodotus’ is not accidental, but rather an intentional feature of the narrative. Strassler notes that Herodotus, “a Dorian from Halicarnassus, seems to have had a poor opinion of Ionians,” arguing that Herodotus saw the Ionians as cowardly and “too soft,” and responsible

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<sup>65</sup> LSJ, s.v. “γλῶσσα,” for which the primary definition is “*tongue*, as the organ of speech” (A.2), and “language” also appears as a frequent definition (II).

<sup>66</sup> LSJ, s.v. “φωνή,” which is defined primarily as “sound, tone” or, properly, “the sound of the voice” (A). Other definitions include “speech, voice, utterance” (A.I), and “any articulate sound,” (A.I.3), and only peripherally as “faculty of speech, discourse” (A.II) or “language” (A.II.2).

<sup>67</sup> Asheri et. al. 2007, 173

for the “hopeless” revolt that ultimately harmed the Hellenes.<sup>68</sup> Like Herodotus’ use of “misleading variation” (παραγωγή), the minimization of the Ionians’ cultural language practices to φωνή (“sound”) is part of a political project, showing the Ionians as weak because of their internal divisions.

After describing the cultural boundaries of the other two groups of Ionians, Herodotus rounds off his account of the many ways of speaking in Ionia by reiterating that he sees four types of speech. He does so, however, using language terms distinct from those he employed to introduce this diversity of languages at the beginning of the digression. Where previously Herodotus had spoken of “four customs of variation,” (τρόπους τέσσερας παραγωγέων, 1.142.3), locating the Ionian dialects in “custom” (τρόπος)<sup>69</sup> and “variation” (παραγωγή),<sup>70</sup> he now asserts that “there are four imprints of the language” (χαρακτῆρες γλώσσης τέσσερες γίνονται, 1.142.4). With this conclusion, Herodotus returns to the term “imprint” (χαρακτῆρ) which he used also to discuss the Pelasgian language retained by some groups of contemporary Pelasgians. Although the use of χαρακτῆρ in the Pelasgian episode seems initially to refer mainly or even solely to language change – a χαρακτῆρ as the specific use of a language bounded chronologically based on changes to the language that accumulate over time, just as a “mark engraved, impress[ed], stamp[ed] on coins and seals”<sup>71</sup> – this second use of χαρακτῆρ at 1.142.4, so soon after the

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<sup>68</sup> Strassler 2009, 77 n.1.43.3d

<sup>69</sup> LSJ, s.v. “τρόπος” gives “a way of life, habit, custom” (III).

<sup>70</sup> LSJ, s.v. “παραγωγή” where “leading astray, misleading” is given (II), as well as the more specific “variation of dialect,” for which only this passage is cited (II.3).

<sup>71</sup> LSJ, s.v. “χαρακτῆρ” (II).

derogatory παραγωγή in 1.142.3, shows that the term is in fact political.<sup>72</sup> For Herodotus, a χαρακτήρ of language is a speaking practice that lacks some vital aspect of power. Like our word ‘dialect’ today, a χαρακτήρ is a γλῶσσα without an army, without the social clout necessary to become a dominant tongue.

## Conclusions

Ultimately, what we see of language change and divergence in Herodotus’ *Histories* suggests that Herodotus saw these historical patterns regarding language as determined by human action. Just as Herodotus’ choice of narratives “participate[s] in a discursive conflict over the proper relations of power and modes of exchange,”<sup>73</sup> the narratives themselves present even non-material cultural *nomoi* like language as objects with varying value within the economic sphere of Mediterranean exchange and trade culture. Furthermore, these Herodotean narratives assign subjective value to how different *ethnê* make use of their own – and others’ – *nomoi*, and, as a result, they attribute “relations of power” to human choices about *nomoi*, language use, and exchange. As Munson describes, Herodotus’ approach to such historical patterns is both humanistic and political:

The signals of similarity between different *ethnea* [sic] both conform to the more general principle of the patterned unity of the world and suggest specific ways in

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<sup>72</sup> Herodotus in fact uses χαρακτήρ three times in the *Histories*: when talking about language at 1.57.3 and 1.142.4, and once, in a non-language context, at 1.116.1. In this third passage, Herodotus says that the Median king Astyages recognized his grandson Cyrus because “the imprint of his face seemed to be like [Astyages’] own [face]” (ὁ τε χαρακτήρ τοῦ προσώπου προσφέρεσθαι ἐδόκεε ἐξ ἑωυτὸν, 1.116.1). Although this passage does not make reference to language, the themes of inheritance through blood descent mirror the themes of inheritance through cultural descent seen in Herodotus’ more language-based episodes previously explored. Kurke explores this episode in detail, especially in term of its impact on the binary of *nomos* and *physis* (Kurke 1999, 322-324).

<sup>73</sup> Kurke 1999, 29

which historical processes can reproduce themselves cross-culturally. I am speaking here not of firm historical laws or inevitable cycles but of recognizable models of likely human behavior and of likely consequences.<sup>74</sup>

Herodotus shows us that, although language change is not wholly under the control of a society at any given time, according to his worldview, the choice of which “imprint” of language one elects to use does allow individuals – and cultural and political groups – to make use of language as a tool for power.

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<sup>74</sup> Munson 2001, 106-7

## Appendix I: Verbs of Language in Herodotus, Organized by Passage in Text

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
1.57.1	ἔσαν (“[the Pelasgians] were speaking”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	ἴημι	ἦντινα γλῶσσαν (“what language”)
1.57.2	ἰέντες (“[the Pelasgians], speaking”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	ἴημι	βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν (“a non-Greek language”)
1.57.3	μετέμαθε (“[the Attic ethnos] changed”)	third person singular aorist active indicative	μεταμανθάνω	τὴν γλῶσσαν (“the language”)
1.57.3	εἰσί (“[the peoples of Creston and of Placia] are”)	third person plural present active indicative	εἰμί	ὁμόγλωσσοι (“speaking the same tongue”)
1.57.3	ἠνεῖκαντο (“[the peoples of Creston and of Placia] carried”)	third person plural aorist middle indicative	φέρω	γλώσσης χαρακτῆρα (“the character of language”)
1.57.3	ἔχουσι (“[the peoples of Creston and of Placia] hold”)	third person plural present active indicative	ἔχω	τοῦτον [γλώσσης χαρακτῆρα] ἐν φυλακῇ (“this [character of language] in keeping”)
1.58.1	διαχρᾶται (“[Greece] habitually practices”)	third person singular present middle-passive subjunctive	διαχράομαι	τῇ αὐτῇ γλώσσει (“the same language”)
1.58.1	ἔόν (“[the Pelasgian ethnos] being”)	neuter singular nominative present active participle	εἰμί	βάρβαρον (“non-Greek”)
1.73.3	ἐκμαθεῖν (“in order to learn thoroughly”)	aorist active infinitive	ἐκμανθάνω	τὴν γλῶσσαν (“the language”)
1.85.4	ἔρηξε (“he broke into”)	third person singular aorist active indicative	ῥήγνυμι	φωνήν (“speech”)
1.110.1	ἦν (“there was”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	εἰμί	οὐνομα δὲ τῇ γυναικί... τῇ κατὰ τὴ Ἑλλήνων γλῶσσαν, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Μηδικὴν (“to the woman a name [Cyno] from the Greek language and a name [Spako] from the Median language”)

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
1.142.3	νενομίκασι (“[the Ionians] have in common use”)	third person plural perfect active indicative	νομίζω	γλῶσσαν οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν... ἀλλὰ τρόπους τέσσαρας παραγωγέων (“not the same language, but four customs of variation”)
1.142.4	διαλεγόμεναι (“[these cities], using a dialect”)	feminine plural present middle-passive participle	διαλέγω	κατὰ ταῦτα... σφίσι (“from the same things for themselves”)
1.142.4	ὁμολογέουσι (“[these cities] agree”)	third person plural present active indicative	ὁμολογέω	τῆσι πρότερον λεχθείησι κατὰ γλῶσσαν οὐδέν (“with the things having been spoken before according to no language”)
1.142.4	ὁμοφωνέουσι (“[these cities] speak the same language”)	third person plural present active indicative	ὁμοφωνέω	σφίσι (“as them”)
1.142.4	διαλέγονται (“[the Chians and the Erythraeans] use a dialect”)	third person plural present middle-passive indicative	διαλέγω	κατὰ τῶντὸ (“from this”)
1.142.4	γίνονται (“[these] are”)	third person plural present middle-passive indicative	γίνομαι	χαρακτῆρες γλώσσης τέσσαρες (“four characters of language”)
1.159.3	λέγεται (“it spoke”)	third person singular present middle-passive indicative	λέγω	φωνὴν (“a speech”)
1.172.1	προσκεχωρήκασι (“[the Caunians] have been similar”)	third person plural perfect active indicative	προσχωρέω	γλῶσσαν... πρὸς τὸ Καρικὸν ἔθνος (“to the Carian ethnos with respect to language”)
2.2.2	ἰέναι (“to speak”)	present active infinitive	ἴημι	μηδεμίαν φωνὴν (“no sound”)
2.2.3	ρήξουσι (“[the children] will speak out”)	third person plural future active indicative	ρήγνυμι	ἦντινα φωνὴν (“what sound”)
2.2.3	ἔφώνεον (“[the children] were uttering”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	φωνέω	[word spoken]
2.15.2	ἀπήσουσι (“[the children] will let loose”)	third person plural future active indicative	ἀφίημι	τίνα γλῶσσαν (“what language”)

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
2.36.4	γράφουσι (“[the Greeks] write”)	third person plural present active indicative	γράφω	γράμματα (“letters”)
2.36.4	χρέονται (“[the Egyptians] use”)	third person plural present middle-passive subjunctive	χράω	διφασίοισι γράμμασι (“letters of two kinds”)
2.42.4	νομίζοντες (“[the Ammonians], having in common use”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	νομίζω	φωνήν μεταξύ ἀμφοτέρων (“a language between the two”)
2.56.3	συνέλαβε (“she understood”)	third person singular aorist active indicative	συλλαμβάνω	τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν (“the Greek language”)
2.105.1	ἔστι (“[the language] is”)	third person singular present active indicative	εἰμί	ἢ γλῶσσα ἐμφερής... ἀλλήλοισι (“the language... similar to the others”)
2.154.2	ἐκδιδάσκεσθαι (“to be taught thoroughly”)	present middle-passive infinitive	ἐκδιδάσκω	τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν (“the Greek language”)
2.154.2	ἐκμαθόντων (“of those having learned thoroughly”)	masculine plural genitive aorist active participle	ἐκμανθάνω	τὴν γλῶσσαν (“the language”)
2.158.5	καλέουσι (“[the Egyptians] call”)	third person plural present active indicative	καλέω	βαρβάρους πάντας ... τοὺς μὴ σφίσι ὁμογλώσσους (“all those not speaking the same language ‘barbarians’”)
3.19.1	ἐπισταμένους (“them, those understanding”)	masculine plural accusative present middle-passive participle	ἐπίσταμαι	τὴν Αἰθιοπίδα γλῶσσαν (“the Ethiopian language”)
3.98.3	ἔστι (“[the ethnic groups] are”)	third person singular (with plural neuter) present active indicative	εἰμί	οὐκ ὁμόφωνα (“not speaking the same language”)
4.23.2	ιέντες (“they, speaking”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	ἴημι	φωνὴν ἰδίην (“their own language”)
4.78.1	ἐδίδαξε (“[the mother herself] taught”)	third person singular aorist active indicative	διδάσκω	γλῶσσαν τε Ἑλλάδα καὶ γράμματα (“the Greek language and letters”)
4.87.1	ἐνταμών (“[Darius], having engraved”)	masculine singular nominative aorist active participle	ἐντέμνω	γράμματα ἐς μὲν τὴν Ἀσσύρια ἐς δὲ τὴν Ἑλληνικά (“letters in Assyrian and in Greek”)

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
4.109.1	χρέονται (“[the Budini] use”)	third person plural present middle-passive subjunctive	χράω	γλώσση τὰ μὲν Σκυθικῆ τὰ δὲ Ἑλληνικῆ (“the Scythian language and the Greek”)
4.113.2	φωνῆσαι (“[the Amazon woman was not able] to speak”)	aorist active infinitive	φωνέω	(intransitive)
4.113.2	συνίεσαν (“[the Amazon woman and the Scythian man] were [not] understanding”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	συνίημι	ἀλλήλων (“one another”)
4.113.2	ἔφραζε (“[the Amazon woman] was showing”)	third person singular imperfect active indicative	φράζω	[indirect statement of what was shown]
4.113.2	σημαίνουσα (“[the Amazon woman], indicating with signs”)	feminine singular nominative present active participle	σημαίνω	[indirect statement of what was indicated]
4.114.1	μαθεῖν (“[the men were not able] to learn”)	aorist active infinitive	μανθάνω	τὴν δὲ φωνὴν τὴν μὲν τῶν γυναικῶν (“the language of the women”)
4.114.1	συνέλαβον (“[the women] grasped the meaning of”)	third person plural aorist active indicative	συλλαμβάνω	τὴν [φωνὴν] τῶν ἀνδρῶν (“the men’s speech”)
4.114.2	συνῆκαν (“[the men and the women] understood”)	third person plural aorist active indicative	συνίημι	ἀλλήλων (“one another”)
4.117.1	νομίζουσι (“[the Sauromatai] have in common use”)	third person plural present active indicative	νομίζω	φωνῆ...Σκυθικῆ (“the Scythian language”)
4.117.1	σολοικίζοντες (“[the Sauromatai], speaking incorrectly”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	σολοικίζω	αὐτῆ [φωνῆ] ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου (“the language itself from the beginning”)
4.117.1	ἐξέμαθον (“[the Amazons] did [not] learn thoroughly”)	third person plural aorist active indicative	ἐκμανθάνω	χρηστῶς... αὐτὴν [φωνὴν] (“their language well”)
4.155.3	χρωμένη (“she, using”)	feminine singular nominative present middle-passive participle	χράω	Ἑλλάδι γλώσση (“the Greek language”)

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
4.183.4	νενομίκασι (“[the troglodyte Ethiopians] have had in common use”)	third person plural perfect active indicative	νομίζω	γλῶσσαν δὲ οὐδεμιῇ ἄλλῃ παρομοίην (“a language closely resembling no other”)
4.183.4	τετρίγασι (“[the troglodyte Ethiopians] utter shrill cries”)	third person plural perfect active indicative	τρίζω	κατὰ περ αἱ νυκτερίδες (“like bats [do]”)
5.58.1	ἐσήγαγον (“[the Phoenicians] introduced”)	third person plural aorist active indicative	εἰσάγω	γράμματα (“letters”)
5.58.1	χρέονται (“[the Phoenicians] use”)	third person plural present middle-passive subjunctive	χράω	τοῖσι [γράμμασι] (“letters”)
5.58.1	μετέβαλλον (“[the Phoenicians] were changing”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	μεταβάλλω	τῇ φωνῇ καὶ τὸν ῥυθμὸν τῶν γραμμάτων (“the sound and shape of the letters”)
5.58.2	παραλαβόντες (“[the Greeks], having received”)	masculine plural nominative aorist active participle	παραλαμβάνω	τὰ γράμματα (“the letters”)
5.58.2	μεταρρυθμίσαντες (“[the Greeks] having changed the form of”)	masculine plural nominative aorist active participle	μεταρρυθμίζω	σφέων ὀλίγα [γράμματα] (“some letters of them”)
5.58.2	ἐχρέωντο (“[the Greeks] used”)	third person plural imperfect middle-passive indicative	χράω	[τὰ γράμματα] (“the letters”)
5.58.2	χρεώμενοι (“[the Greeks], using”)	masculine plural nominative present middle-passive participle	χράω	[τὰ γράμματα] (“the letters”)
5.93.2	ἤκουσαν (“[the rest of the allies] heard”)	third person plural aorist active indicative	ἀκούω	εἶπαντος ἐλευθέρως (“the things having been freely spoken”)
5.93.2	ῥήξας (“having broken into”)	masculine singular nominative aorist active participle	ῥήγνυμι	φωνὴν (“speech”)
6.29.2	μετεῖς (“he, uttering”)	masculine singular nominative aorist active participle	μεθίημι	Περσίδα γλῶσσαν (“the Persian language”)
6.119.4	φυλάσοντες (“[the Eretrians], keeping”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	φυλάσσω	τὴν ἀρχαίην γλῶσσαν (“the language from the beginning”)

Passage	Main Verb and Translation	Main Verb Form Description	Main Verb	Context of Main Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
6.138.2	ἐδίδασκον (“[the women] were teaching”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	διδάσκω	γλῶσσάν τε τὴν Ἀττικὴν καὶ τρόπους τοῦς Ἀθηναίων τοῦς παῖδας (“their children the Attic language and the customs of the Athenians”)
7.9B.2	έόντας (“[the Greeks], being”)	masculine plural accusative present active participle	εἰμί	ὁμογλώσσους (“speaking the same tongue”)
7.70.1	διαλλάσσοντες (“[the two types of Ethiopians], differing”)	masculine plural nominative present active participle	διαλλάσσω	τοῖσι ἑτέροισι... φωνῆν (“from each other in language”)
7.85.1	εἰσί (“[the ethnic group] is”)	third person singular present active indicative	εἰμί	Περσικόν.. φωνῆ (“Persian by language”)
8.65.1	ἀκούειν (“to hear”)	present active infinitive	ἀκούω	φωνῆς (“a sound”)
8.135.2	χρᾶν (“that [the prophet] uses”)	present active infinitive	χράω	βαρβάρῳ γλώσσει (“a non-Greek language”)
8.135.3	ἀκούοντας (“[the Thebans], hearing”)	masculine plural accusative present active participle	ἀκούω	βαρβάρου γλώσσης (“a non-Greek language”)
8.135.3	χρᾶν (“that [the oracle] uses”)	present active infinitive	χράω	Καρίῃ γλώσσει (“the Carian language”)
8.144.2	έόν (“[Greece], being”)	neuter singular nominative present active participle	εἰμί	ὁμόγλωσσον (“speaking the same language”)
9.11.2	ἐκάλεον (“[the Spartans] were calling”)	third person plural imperfect active indicative	καλέω	ξείνους τοῦς βαρβάρους (“strangers barbarians”)
9.16.2	ιέντα (“speaking”)	masculine singular accusative present active participle	ἴημι	Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν (“the Greek language”)

## Appendix II: Verbs of Language in Herodotus, Organized Alphabetically by Main Verb

Main Verb	Select Verb Definitions (from Liddell and Scott)	Locations in Text	Context of Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
ἀκούω	"hear of, hear tell of" (LSJ A.b), "listen to, give ear to" (LSJ II)	5.93.2	εἶπαντος ἔλευθέρως
		8.65.1	φωνῆς
		8.135.3	βαρβάρου γλώσσης
ἀφίημι	"send forth, discharge," and therefore, "let loose one's tongue, make utterance," or "give vent to" (LSJ A)	2.15.2	τίνα γλῶσσαν
γίγνομαι	"come into being," (LSJ I) or, with a predicate, "come into a certain state, become" (LSJ II)	1.142.4	χαρακτῆρες γλώσσης τέσσερες
γράφω	"to express by written characters, to write" (LSJ II)	2.36.4	γράμματα
διαλλάσσω	"to differ from one in a thing" (LSJ IV)	7.70.1	τοῖσι ἑτέροισι... φωνῆν
διαλέγω	typically "pick out" (LSJ A), but in Hdt. 1.142, "use a dialect or language" (LSJ B.4)	1.142.4	κατὰ ταῦτά... σφίσι
		1.142.4	κατὰ τὸντὸ
διαχράομαι	"to use constantly or habitually" (LSJ I)	1.57.8	τῇ αὐτῇ γλώσση
διδάσκω	"to teach" (LSJ I)	4.78.1	γλῶσσάν τε Ἑλλάδα καὶ γράμματα
		6.138.2	γλῶσσάν τε τὴν Ἀττικὴν καὶ τρόπους τοὺς Ἀθηναίων τοὺς παῖδας
εἰμί	"most freq[ue]ntly," meaning "to be" (LSJ B)	1.57.3	ὁμόγλωσσοι
		1.58.1	βάρβαρον
		1.110.1	ὄνομα δὲ τῇ γυναικί... τῇ κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλήνων γλῶσσαν, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Μηδικὴν
		2.105.1	ἢ γλῶσσα ἐμφορῆς... ἀλλήλοισι
		3.98.3	οὐκ ὁμόφωνα
		7.9B.2	ὁμογλώσσους
		7.85.1	Περσικὸν.. φωνῆ
		8.144.2	ὁμόγλωσσον

Main Verb	Select Verb Definitions (from Liddell and Scott)	Locations in Text	Context of Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
εισάγω	“bring in, import” (LSJ A.3), or “introduce new customs” (LSJ A.5)	5.58.1	γράμματα
ἐκδιδάσκω	“teach thoroughly” (LSJ A)	2.154.2	τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν
ἐκμανθάνω	“learn thoroughly” (LSJ I)	1.73.3	τὴν γλῶσσαν
		2.154.2	τὴν γλῶσσαν
		4.117.1	χρηστῶς... αὐτὴν [φωνήν]
ἐντέμνω	“cut in, engrave upon” (LSJ A)	4.87.1	γράμματα ἐς μὲν τὴν Ἀσσύρια ἐς δὲ τὴν Ἑλληνικά
ἐπίσταμαι	“understand a matter, know, be versed in or acquainted with” (LSJ II)	3.19.1	τὴν Αἰθιοπίδα γλῶσσαν
ἔχω	predominantly, “to have or to hold” (LSJ A), as well as “to hold in guard, keep safe, protect” (LSJ A.II.10)	1.57.3	τοῦτον [γλώσσης χαρακτηῖρα] ἐν φυλακῇ
ἴημι	generally “release, let go,” but also “of sounds, utter,” both “to speak Greek,” and “to let loose every kind of speech” (LSJ A.2)	1.57.1	ἦντινα γλῶσσαν
		1.57.2	βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν
		2.2.2	μηδεμίαν φωνήν
		4.23.2	φωνήν ἰδίην
		9.16.2	Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν
καλέω	“call by name, name” (LSJ II)	2.158.5	βαρβάρους πάντας ... τοὺς μὴ σφίσι ὁμογλώσσους
		9.11.2	ξείνους τοὺς βαρβάρους
λέγω	“say, speak” (LSJ III)	1.159.3	φωνήν
μεθίημι	“let go, let fall, throw,” or “of words, utter” (LSJ A.I.2)	6.29.2	Περσίδα γλῶσσαν
μανθάνω	“learn, esp[ecially] by study,” but also “by practice,” or “by experience” (LSJ A)	4.114.1	τὴν δὲ φωνήν τὴν μὲν τῶν γυναικῶν
μεταβάλλω	“turn about, change, alter” (LSJ II)	5.58.1	τῇ φωνῇ καὶ τὸν ρυθμὸν τῶν γραμμάτων
μεταμανθάνω	“to learn differently,” or “to unlearn one language and learn another instead” (LSJ A)	1.57.3	τὴν γλῶσσαν

Main Verb	Select Verb Definitions (from Liddell and Scott)	Locations in Text	Context of Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
μεταρρυθμίζω	“change the form or fashion of a thing” (LSJ A)	5.58.2	σφέων ὀλίγα [γράμματα]
νομίζω	“use customarily, practise” or “to have a language in common use” (LSJ A); see also “make common use of, use” and “esp[ecially] use as current coin” (LSJ A.3)	1.142.3	γλῶσσαν οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν... ἀλλὰ τρόπους τέσσερας παραγωγέων
		2.42.4	φωνὴν μεταξὺ ἀμφοτέρων
		4.117.1	φωνῆ...Σκυθικῆ
		4.183.4	γλῶσσαν δὲ οὐδεμιῇ ἄλλῃ παρομοίην
ὁμολογέω	“correspond, agree with” (LSJ II)	1.142.4	τῆσι πρότερον λεχθείσῃσι κατὰ γλῶσσαν οὐδέν
ὁμοφωνέω	“speak the same language with” (LSJ A)	1.142.4	σφισι
παραλαμβάνω	“receive from,” used elsewhere in Hdt.“of inherited rites or customs” (LSJ A)	5.58.2	τὰ γράμματα
προσχωρέω	generally “go to, approach,” (LSJ A) but also, as here, “approach, i.e. agree with, be like” (LSJ A.II.3)	1.172.1	γλῶσσαν... πρὸς τὸ Καρικὸν ἔθνος
ρήγνυμι	typically “break asunder, rend, shatter,” (LSJ A), as well as “let loose the voice, of children and persons who have been dumb or silent, break into speech, speak out” (LSJ A.4)	1.85.4	φωνὴν
		2.2.3	ἦντινα φωνὴν
		5.93.2	φωνὴν
σημαίνω	“show by a sign, indicate, point out” (LSJ A)	4.113.2	[indirect statement of what was indicated]
σολοικίζω	“speak or write incorrectly, commit a solecism,” as here, “speak bad Scythian” (LSJ A)	4.117.1	αὐτῆ [φωνῆ] ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου
συλλαμβάνω	most often, “collect, gather together” (LSJ A), but also, “in speaking, comprehend, comprise” (LSJ A.4)	2.56.3	τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν
		4.114.1	τὴν [φωνὴν] τῶν ἀνδρῶν
συνίημι	literally “bring or set together,” (LSJ I), “perceive, hear,” (LSJ II) and, here, “understand one another's language” (LSJ II.3)	4.113.2	ἀλλήλων
		4.114.1	ἀλλήλων
τρίζω	“utter a shrill cry” (LSJ A)	4.183.4	κατὰ περ αἰ νυκτερίδες

Main Verb	Select Verb Definitions (from Liddell and Scott)	Locations in Text	Context of Verb (Direct Object, etc.)
γράφω	"use" (LSJ C.II)	2.36.4	διφασίοισι γράμμασι
		4.109.1	γλώσση τὰ μὲν Σκυθικῆ τὰ δὲ Ἑλληνικῆ
		4.155.3	Ἑλλάδι γλώσση
		5.58.1	τοῖσι [γράμμασι]
		5.58.2	[τὰ γράμματα]
		5.58.2	[τὰ γράμματα]
		8.135.2	βαρβάρῳ γλώσση
		8.135.3	Καρίῃ γλώσση
φέρω	"bear or carry a load" (LSJ A.I)	1.57.3	τὸν γλώσσης χαρακτῆρα
φράζω	"show forth, tell, declare" (LSJ A.2)	4.113.2	[indirect statement of what was shown]
φυλάσσω	"keep watch and ward, keep guard" (LSJ A)	6.119.4	τὴν ἀρχαίην γλῶσσαν
φωνέω	"produce a sound" (LSJ A), or "speak, give utterance" (LSJ I), specifically "utter the word βέκος" at Hdt. 2.2 (LSJ I)	2.2.3	[word spoken]
		4.113.2	(intransitive)

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