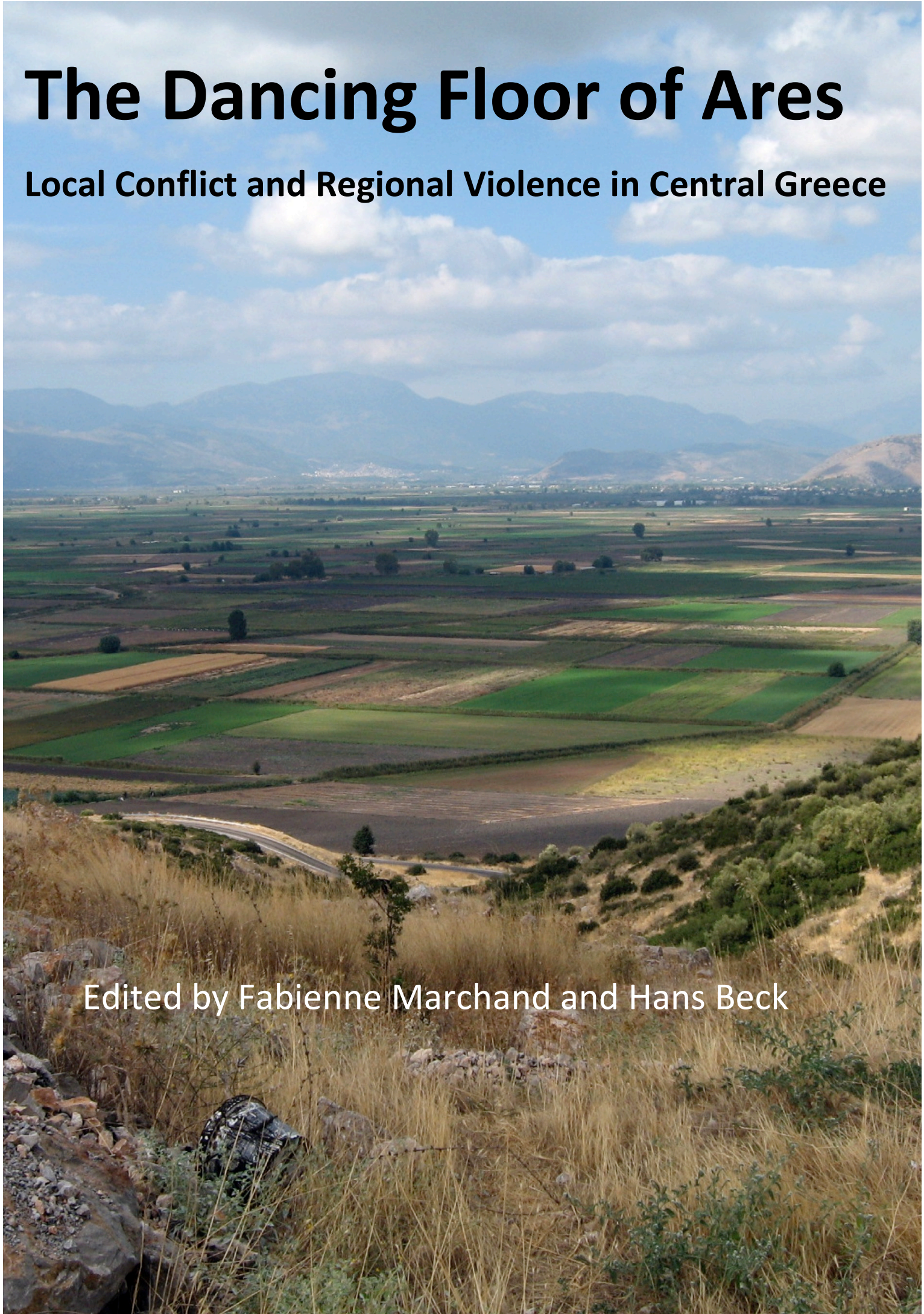


The Dancing Floor of Ares

Local Conflict and Regional Violence in Central Greece

Edited by Fabienne Marchand and Hans Beck



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Preface

The present collection of papers stems from two one-day workshops, the first at McGill University on November 9, 2017, followed by another at the Université de Fribourg on May 24, 2018. Both meetings were part of a wider international collaboration between two projects, the *Parochial Polis* directed by Hans Beck in Montreal and now at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, and Fabienne Marchand's Swiss National Science Foundation *Old and New Powers: Boiotian International Relations from Philip II to Augustus*. The collaboration was further facilitated by a Swiss National Science Foundation Short Visit Fellowship that brought Fabienne Marchand as a Visiting Professor to McGill University in the fall of 2017.

Famously dubbed, according to Plutarch, the “Dancing Floor of Ares” by the 4th century Theban general Epaminondas (Plut. *Life of Marcellus* 21.2), the region of Boiotia hosted throughout Antiquity a series of battles that shaped the history of the ancient world, such as the battle of Plataia – which ended the Persian Wars in 479 – and the battle of Chaironeia, won in 338 by the Macedonian king Philip II and his son Alexander the Great over a coalition of Greek states. The present volume is devoted to different dances of Ares. Rather than discussing seminal battles through the lens of military history, it investigates regional conflicts and local violence in Central Greece, with a particular focus on the region Boiotia, through the complementary approaches, conceptual approaches and synergies offered by the two research projects. This double perspective allows us to explore the crucial role played by conflict in the shaping of the Boiotian experience. At the same time, the region's relations with various foreign powers (the Achaian *koinon*, the Macedonian kings, the Romans among others) as well as with its neighbours, such as Athens, Lokris, and Euboea, become visible. Organised as a series of thematic studies involving mythology, genealogy, federalism, political institutions, and geopolitical strategies, our inquiry starts with the Mycenaean period, and runs down through the Classical and Hellenistic periods to conclude with the involvement of the Romans in Central Greece.

The Montreal workshop received funding from the Anneliese Maier Research Prize that was awarded to Hans Beck by the German Humboldt Foundation, as well as from the John MacNaughton Chair of Classics, which he held at McGill University at the time. The Fribourg workshop was supported by the Université de Fribourg Fonds du Centenaire and the Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines. The respective teams of research assistants in Montreal and Fribourg did a magnificent job to turn both workshops into a wonderful experience: Corey Straub, Cyrena Gerardi, Emilie Lucas, Daniel Whittle, and Roy van Wijk. As the papers were prepared for publication, we received insightful comments from the anonymous peer-reviewers. Tim Howe offered helpful advice to improve the manuscript of this first volume in the new AHB Supplement Series. To all we offer our heartfelt thanks.

Fabienne Marchand and Hans Beck

May 2019

From Regional Rivalry to Federalism: Revisiting the Battle of Koroneia (447 BCE)

Hans Beck

Abstract: In 447 BCE, a gang of rebels that later sources described as ‘Orchomenizers’ ambushed an Athenian expedition corps on the southern banks of Lake Kopais and delivered a deadly blow. Our knowledge of the battle is scarce; it draws on a few notes in Thucydides and Diodorus. From the course of events in the aftermath of Koroneia, however, we learn that the encounter caused an almost seismic shift in Greek affairs. Not only did the battle alter the trajectory of power politics in Central Greece, it also paved the way towards the creation of an all-new federal alliance in Boiotia. This article examines the Battle of Koroneia from the perspective of its lasting legacy in local and regional conversations in Boiotia. In particular, it will be demonstrated how it energized a discourse environment that allowed other Boiotians to plug in the tradition, overcome deeply rooted histories of local violence, and shape a federal future for the region.

Keywords: Boiotia, Persian War, Battle of Koroneia, Boiotian League, medism, federalism, Pindar, Thebes, Plataia

Medism and its Thorny Legacy*

Theban collaboration with Persia in the campaigns of Thermopylai and Plataia has been discussed – and stigmatized – by ancient and modern writers alike. Charged with overtones of moral betrayal, the verdict often ignores what had actually happened on the battlefield, under what circumstances, and how the allegation of medism shaped a discursive reality subject to the purposes of those who disseminated it. Let us first turn to Herodotus whose account has become formative for all other ancient traditions on the medism of Thebes. Incidentally, he also was the one who introduced the term “siding with the Mede” (*mēdizein*) into Greek literature, where it became so fatefully entangled with the city of Thebes.¹

The motif runs through several sections of the *Histories*. In book seven, which relates the campaign at Thermopylai, Herodotus writes that a Theban contingent of 400 men served under Leonidas’ command. The reason for the inclusion of troops from Thebes was to test their loyalties, since “the Thebans were strongly suspected of Persian sympathies.” For although the Thebans sent a detachment, “their sympathies nonetheless lay with the enemy” (7.205). A few chapters later (7.222), the Thebans are labelled as hostages of Leonidas, present at Thermopylai against their will. Consequently, once the Greek forces were overpowered, the Thebans “approached the enemy with outstretched hands, crying

* This article is the shortened and modified version of a corresponding section in my latest book *Localism and the Ancient Greek City-State* (University of Chicago Press, 2020). I would like to thank the participants in both Dancing Floor of Ares workshops, in Montreal and Fribourg, for their comments and input. Special thanks are due to my co-organizer and long-term collaborator Fabienne Marchand.

¹ Cf. Graf 1984. On Herodotus’ medizing Thebans, see now Steinbock 2013: 115-118.

out that in their zeal for the Persian interest they had been among the first to give earth and water to the king, and had no share in the responsibility for the injury done him, because they had come to Thermopylai against their will” (7.233).

Herodotus returns to the motif of Theban ingratiation in the opening sections of book nine (9.2), when the Thebans press Mardonios to make Boiotia his base camp for the attack on Athens and offer secret advice on how to subjugate all of Hellas. After the description of a thriving banquet at Thebes hosted by a certain Attaginos to celebrate the alliance between the Theban aristocracy and the Persian nobility (9.16), the theme next resumes during the Battle of Plataia, when the Thebans are said to have “fought so hard that three hundred of their best and bravest men were killed.” Meanwhile, the Boiotian cavalry “did good service to the [Persian] fugitives ... acting as a screen between their friends and the pursuing Greeks” (9.67-68). Although the battle is lost, the Theban cavalry, under the command of Asopodoros, son of Timandros, delivers a deadly blow to scattered units of Megarians and also Phliasians (9.69). Finally, once the Greeks buried their dead, they turn to Thebes to besiege the city to “demand for the surrender of the traitors” (9.87). After twenty days of resistance, the Thebans agree to the terms of surrender. One of the leading figures, Attaginos, cowardly makes his escape, while others “expected to get a chance to defend themselves and hoped, in that case, to secure acquittal by bribery” (9.88). But, contrary to their expectations, Pausanias escorted the Thebans to Corinth and had them executed, presumably following a trial held before representatives of the Hellenic League.

It is a truism to note that the passages assembled here constitute a narrative rather than a historical checklist. This aspect does not always receive full attention. Narrative and event are not mutually exclusive of one another; both are inextricably entwined, and attempts to disentangle one from the other, and hence present the “facts” independently from the narrative, are futile. Hayden White (1987) has famously argued that the primary carrier of historical writing and historical knowledge in general is the linguistic form in which both are clothed. This view has clearly become the new scholarly benchmark, although it ought not undermine the existence of basic epistemological differences in the approach to our sources: i.e., whether our examination is driven by discourse analysis or the attempt to trace historical outlines, in Ranke’s time-honored words, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* – always bearing in mind that Ranke’s realness is a phantom.

Herodotus’ story on the medism of Thebes is a perfect example. His account is usually taken at face value on Thebes’ role in the Persian Wars: Thebes medized, and these are the facts. All the while, Herodotus’ account is charged with personal opinions that clearly discount the authenticity of his narrative. For instance, the picturesque portrayal of the banquet at Attaginos’ house (9.15.4-16.5) is clearly a stereotypical depiction of a Greek symposium scene, with little historical veracity to it. Both the setting and the speeches delivered betray a moralizing agenda, mingled with philosophical notions on fate and the brevity of life. It would be high-handed to declare the banquet not historical, but it is safe to assert that the detailing of the story, like on so many other occasions, was Herodotus’ invention.²

There is no doubt that the Herodotean narrative was harmful to Thebes. Although the account was at times contradictory in itself, the *Histories* presented a cut and dried image of Theban medism: driven by a general sense of pro-Persian sentiments and hatred for Athens, the Thebans were “staunch medizers and eager participants in the war” (9.40). On

² In similar vein, e.g., Hdt. 1.96-101 (Deiokes), 3.80-82 (constitutional debate), 7.46 (Xerxes’ reflections); cf. Flower and Marincola 2002: 126-133.

the battlefield, this was revealed in an almost overambitious zeal to do as much harm to the forces of the Hellenic League as possible; hence the strike against scattered Greek forces after the Persian defeat at Plataia. No matter how complicated the chain of events “really” was – we will turn to this further below – Herodotus’ tradition on the campaigns from Thermopylai to Plataia presented a thorny legacy for the Thebans.³

What was the emic perspective? Pindar’s poetry, itself a unique body of evidence, offers a glimpse at the situation in Thebes in the early months after its surrender to the Hellenic League. In *Isthmian* 8, Pindar celebrates the victory of Kleandros of Aigina in the boys’ pankration in the Games at Nemea. The ode does not seem to have been composed much later than 477 BCE, in the following year at the latest. Since Pindar, the Theban, praised Aigina, although both cities had recently fought against each other at Plataia, the poet justifies his composition with reference to their common namesake nymphs, born as twin-daughters of Asopos.⁴

The ode reflects a mingled feeling of sorrow for the role of Thebes in the Persian War and of joy at the liberation of Greece. It states, “from above our heads some god has turned aside that stone of Tantalus, a weight Hellas could never dare. Now the terror (*deima*) has gone by” (lines 9-12). The ode then continues to praise the healing force of freedom (*eleutheria*), which straightens the “crooked way of life” (lines 14-15). The apologetic tenor illustrates redemption after a period of “terror,” which seems to refer to the past threat of Persian domination. But the passage is ambiguous; it also allows for Aiginetan or Theban connections, or both. With references to “great sorrows” (line 6) and “pain” (line 7), “ills” (line 7) and “toil” (line 8), the ode almost certainly mirrors the grief of the Aiginetans who had lost so many men in the Persian War. At the same time, it airs a sense of disaffection with Theban politics in recent years. The poem alludes to a certain degree of apprehension, maybe even a state of disarray at Thebes.⁵

It is easy to see how the Thebans, in the year following the punishment of the ringleaders of medism, would have been distressed about what had happened. Some of the most ardent advocates for medism were killed or executed, others had chosen exile, yet others, members of the ruling oligarchic elite, would have participated in the governance of the city. So by the time of the ode, the Thebans must have felt uncertain about how to deal with their troubled past; the true substance of how the legacy of medism would shape their discourse in the future was yet unclear. Both the immediate consequences (the execution of a few men notwithstanding) and the long-term implications were open to negotiation. Pindar’s poem tells us that the Theban assessment of the Persian War had only just begun.

More explicit responses came a generation later. The Boiotian historian Aristophanes (*BNJ* 379), a younger contemporary of Herodotus, voiced a different point of view. Few fragments of Aristophanes’ work survive, although some pieces assembled under the names of other authors in the latest edition of Boiotian local histories may well derive from Aristophanes too. Despite their low number, Aristophanes’ fragments offer exciting glimpses into the local discourse environment in Thebes in the later 5th century BCE. In one of the texts, Aristophanes relates how the Thebans handled the allegation of their medism in the Persian War, allegations raised so prominently in Herodotus’ *Histories*. Aristophanes

³ Steinbock 2013: 113-115 has demonstrated how the historical memorialization was crafted, endorsed, and kept alive mostly by Athens – an effective strategy to shape images of self and other.

⁴ Carey 1981: 184; Burnett 2005: 113.

⁵ Cf. Carey 1981: 184-185, 188-190; Demand 1982: 29; Burnett 2005: 107-118.

asserts that Herodotus “demanded money from the Thebans, but he received none, and when he tried to speak and argue with the youths, he was barred by the archons” (F 5). The way in which this is pitched evokes the image of bribery: Aristophanes claimed that Herodotus disseminated an unfavorable image of the Thebans because they were unwilling to pay him. They actually went as far as to prevent him from talking to, let alone instructing, the youths in the city.⁶

The constellation is not improbable. Herodotus had visited Thebes when he saw the notorious Kadmeian *grammata* in the Temple of Apollo Ismenios (5.59; cf. also 1.52; 1.92). During his stay, he might well have delivered a reading, and of course he would have engaged in conversations with many people in many contexts. It is therefore not impossible that he got into an argument with the archons at some point; there also appear to have been quarrels over the Theban high command at Thermopylai, another issue where Herodotus’ views were at odds with what the Thebans believed (Aristophanes F 6). Aristophanes may have known of these incidents from personal experience.⁷ Be that as it may, on a minimal interpretation, F 5 indicates three things: that the Persian War was a touchy topic in Thebes; that the ruling elites, represented here by the archons, were dismayed with the versions others told about them; and that the Thebans made an attempt to shape and, effectively, to cultivate their own assessment of the war, which in turn they sought to instill in the future generation of citizens. The local encoding of their historical tradition was incompatible with Herodotus, who appears to have been a crook to the Thebans. But hazy allegations of bribery were hardly strong enough arguments to alleviate the legacy of medism.

Later evidence indicates that the discourse was more complex. Thucydides reveals some of the guiding motifs. In his work, the topic is embedded in the recollection of hostile relations between Thebes, Athens, and Plataia in the first years of the Peloponnesian War. Again, a brief review of the narrative is in order. Beginning in 2.2, Thucydides recounts the Theban attack on Plataia in times of peace. After the Thebans entered the city, the boiotarchs assembled the Plataians in the agora, demanding that they break their alliance with Athens and inviting the Plataians “to resume their traditional place in the common *patria* of all Boiotians” (2.2.4). When the Plataians learn that the Theban force was only some 300 strong, they turn against the intruders and slaughter the majority of them (2.3-4). With Athenian support, the Plataians withstand a series of Theban attacks (2.5-6), but when the Thebans gain support from Peloponnesian forces the following year (2.71), the tides turn against Plataia. In an attempt to avert impending raids on their land, the Plataians appeal to the Spartans, arguing that the attack was unjust and conducted in a manner unworthy of them as well as their fathers. The Spartan king Pausanias, the Plataians claim, had restored their autonomy in return for their services in the Persian Wars, a grant that was accompanied by sacrifices and public oaths. The Plataian plea falls on deaf ears and fighting ensues between both parties, in the course of which the Spartans turn to siegecraft

⁶ Citation: *BNJ* 379 F 5, from Plut. *de malign. Her.* 31-33 = *Mor.* 864d. On Aristophanes, cf. A. Schachter’s Biographical Essay in *BNJ* 379; Fowler 2013: 637-638; Tufano 2019.

⁷ Aristophanes’ lifespan, cf. Schachter, *BNJ* 379; Buck 1979: 129-130; Fowler 2013: 637 (early 4th century BCE). F 5 states that the archons barred Herodotus from speaking to the youths because of their “boorish and misologic mindset.” To Fowler, this “may, but need not, suggest an anti-Theban stance” (638). If indeed from another Boiotian city than Thebes, Aristophanes would have had little room to disparage the boorish Theban character; the notorious stigma of rough people (“swine:” Pind. *Ol.* 6.89-90) applied to all Boiotians, not only to the Thebans. If the reference is not inspired by the topic of *de malign. Her.* itself, I take it as an expression of anger of (young?) Aristophanes over the (old) polis authorities at the time. On Herodotus in Thebes, see now Papazarkadas 2014: 242-247.

(2.72-78). In 427, Plataia surrenders (3.52) and a trial before five Spartan judges is staged in the agora to inquire whether the Plataians had rendered any good services to the Spartans and their allies in the present war. The Plataians respond that they had helped the Spartans against both the Persians and the helots (3.54). When the Spartans dismiss this reference, the Plataians are left with no choice but to surrender (3.59).

At this point, the Thebans request permission to speak (3.60): “After we [the Thebans] had settled the rest of Boiotia and had occupied Plataia and other places of which we got possession by driving out a mixed population, the Plataians disdained to submit to our leadership ... and separating themselves from the rest of the Boiotians and breaking away from the customs of our fathers went over to the Athenians” (3.61). Next the Thebans address the subject of medism, a charge that was put on the table by the Plataians earlier (3.54.3; 3.56.4): “Consider the circumstances under which we ... acted as we did. In those days our city was not governed by an oligarchy which granted equal justice to all (*oligarchia isonomos*) nor yet a democracy; affairs were in the hands of a small group of men, the form which is most opposed to law and the best regulated polity, most allied to a tyranny” (3.62.3). Once the Persians had departed and Thebes “returned to a lawful government” (3.62.5), its policy could not have been more different. For “when the Athenians attacked Hellas and endeavored to subjugate our country ... did we not fight and conquer at Koroneia and liberate Boiotia, and do we not now actively contribute to the liberation of the rest?” (loc. cit.). This opens a set of charges directed at the Athenians, who, as the Thebans reiterated, were “endeavoring to enslave Hellas” (3.63.3). The Plataians were partners in this crime, deliberately so and by free choice: “Of our unwilling medism and your wilful atticizing, this, then, is our explanation” (3.64). Wrapping up their case, the Thebans stress again their most immediate charge against the Plataians, which was their slaughtering of the Thebans who had entered their city in 431 (3.66). In doing so, the Plataians killed a particular group of men – the very men whose fathers died at Koroneia when Boiotia was brought over to the Spartan camp (3.67). The account ends with the condemnation of the Plataians and the destruction of their city (3.68).

The Plataian Debate, along with that concerning Mytilene (3.37-50), is a key moment in this section of Thucydides’ work. Thucydides deals with these debates in great detail and with much careful reflection. Above all, the arguments put forth by the various parties reveal some of the guiding principles that led them to the contemplation of, or commitment to, atrocities so characteristic of the Peloponnesian War. Also, the debate presents stereotypical examples of another key theme in this section of the work, that is, the examination of the effect of the war on the smaller states of Hellas. The prominence of the Plataian Debate in particular lies in its interconnection with the outbreak of the hostilities of the Peloponnesian War, a topic Thucydides is greatly concerned with, especially in juxtaposition to how this outbreak related to the deeper causes and motivations that made war, in Thucydides’ mindset, inevitable (1.23.5-6).⁸

As for the Theban speech and its reference to medism, scholars usually focus on the strategy of exculpation as employed by the Thebans. In what might be labeled a disclaimer, they state that their city “was not governed by an oligarchy which granted equal justice to all nor yet a democracy” (3.62.3). The terminology of the passage has naturally received much attention, as has the question of how justified the call for an isonomous oligarchy or democracy was at the time of the Persian Wars.⁹ By pointing to the rule of a small junta, the

⁸ Hornblower 1991: 420-441, 444-466; cf. Macleod 1983: 103-122.

⁹ Cf. Hornblower 1991: 456-457. For a discussion, see below.

Thebans claim that their community of citizens cannot be held responsible for crimes that were committed by those in power. To highlight this and effectively portray themselves as hostages of Attaginos' regime, they stress the profound change in attitude that occurred once that clique was removed from power. As soon as the rule of law returned (3.62.5), the Thebans acted in accordance with all other Greek states that sought to defend their liberty and freedom. Hence, the Thebans did not attempt to debunk the charge of medism. Rather, they denied responsibility for it. Note how Herodotus, who painted Attaginos' rule in picturesque colors, dwelling on extravagant banquets and moralizing speeches, is supplanted here by the Thebans. In Thucydides, the Thebans fully adopt the Attaginos motif, however, it is given a different spin. While the Thebans in Thucydides strictly dissociate themselves from Attaginos – the implicit prerequisite for opposition to unlawful government and the rule of law –, in Herodotus, they concede that their medism was something that was performed “in accord with the community, rather than by individuals” (9.87.2). In Thucydides, then, the Thebans deny communal responsibility, a bold rejection of Herodotus' assertion of collective action.

But the Theban explanation goes further. Reference to the freedom-rhetoric suggests this much. In the middle section of their speech, following their denial of accountability, they juxtapose their medism and Plataia's collaboration with Athens, effectively labelled as atticism (3.64.5). In doing so, they depict their own medism once again as something that was forced upon them, whereas the stance of the Plataians is denounced as wilful policy. Although the parallel between medism and atticism was not entirely accurate, the Thebans endorse this point and pursue it further, charging it with overtones of betrayal.¹⁰ Atticism was not treason to the cause and customs of the Hellenes, but it certainly betrayed the loyalties of the Plataians vis-à-vis their fellow Boiotians. Treason on Plataia's part is an ongoing theme in the Theban speech. Indeed, Plataian betrayal of Boiotia is so notorious that it can be traced back to the arrival of the Boiotians in what later became their home region. Again, in the words of the Thebans (3.61.2), “for after we had settled the rest of Boiotia and had occupied Plataia and other places of which we got possession by driving out a mixed population, the Plataians disdained to submit to our leadership, as had been agreed upon first, and separating themselves from the rest of the Boiotians and breaking away from the customs of our fathers went over to the Athenians.” This reference to the era before the original settlement of Boiotia has been dismissed as carrying little meaning, since the affair itself is so hazy.¹¹ Yet haziness is not the point here. For the parties who were assembled in the agora of Plataia to witness the Theban speech, the heroic war against the aboriginal tribes who inhabited the region prior to the arrival of the Boiotians may well have been a shadowy event, yet it was considered a historical reality. All the same, it was commonly accepted that Thebes had played a prominent role in the defeat of those peoples and had established the foundations of a new Boiotian homeland.¹² With

¹⁰ The term is introduced by Thucydides in 3.62.2, where it is stated that “the only reason the Plataians did not medize was because the Athenians did not, and that, moreover, on the same principle, when the Athenians afterwards assailed all Hellas, they were the only Boiotians who atticized.” The charge resembles what Herodotus says about the Phokians: they only abstained from medism because the neighboring Thessalians did medize (8.30.1). Hornblower 1991: 455 is right to stress that the term “to side with the Athenians,” although technically a neologism in the literary tradition, appears to have been in ordinary use (contra Macleod 1983: 116). Note the parallel in 4.133.1, which denounces the atticism of Thespians. See also below on the notion of “Orchomenizers.”

¹¹ Hornblower 1991: 455.

¹² Thucydides himself offers only an abridged narrative on Boiotian migration and habitation (1.12.1-4), yet he, too, emphasizes the role of Kadmeians/Thebans.

allusions to moral categories such as the ancestral traditions (*patria*: 3.61.2) of all Boiotians, the reference to the origin of their settlement corroborates the allegation that the Plataians acted in violation of sanctioned, time-honoured principles; their actions fell short of nothing but betrayal.¹³

This was even more reprehensible since Plataia joined Athens in its wrong-doings. Once more, the invoked parallel between Persia's attempt to subjugate Hellas and Athens' "endeavour to enslave Greece" (3.63.3) was not really correct – the goals of Athens and Persia were perceived as different by the Greeks. Yet the Thebans endorse this idea energetically. In both cases, the attempt to restrict the freedom of the Greeks was met with fierce resistance. Just as the Persians were ultimately defeated in an almost epic battle that "averted slavery" (Simonides, frg. eleg. 11 W² 26), the Thebans claimed that the Athenians were beaten and Boiotia effectively liberated from the yoke of foreign domination at Koroneia (3.62.5). Only a few sections later, this claim is repeated in a modified form when the Thebans state that the Battle of Koroneia had liberated the Boiotians and brought them over to the Spartan camp (3.67.3). Koroneia is thus presented as a defining moment in the more recent history of Greece. Its participants are virtually glorified as Boiotian liberation heroes. Indeed, when the Thebans summarize their grudges against Plataia, they make the slaughtering of the men whose fathers died at Koroneia the most immediate charge, which once again highlights the prominence attributed to the event.¹⁴

In book four, the same theme occurs in a speech delivered by a certain Pagondas, son of Aiolidas, who addresses the troops of the Boiotian League before the battle at Delion in 427 BCE. It is customary with Boiotians, Pagondas proclaims, that "when a foreign army comes against you to ward it off" (4.92.3). In their dealings with the Athenians, "who are trying to enslave not only their neighbours but those far away" (4), such valour is even more rewarded. The best proof of this is to be found in the battle at Koroneia, "when we defeated them and won for Boiotia great security which lasts to this day" (6). As such, Koroneia is indicative of the noble spirit that impels his countrymen "always to fight for the liberty of their own land" (7). In sum, Pagondas' speech spotlights the collective force Koroneia held for the Boiotians. Described in heroic terms of valour and victory, Pagondas presents the campaign as foundational; the battle is said to have altered the way of life in Boiotia. The way in which this is dramatized fosters the conclusion that Thucydides here picked up on a prominent theme, one that was widely discussed in Boiotia and beyond.

Incidentally, from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (3.5.4) it is obvious that the Athenians, too, assigned significance to the Battle of Koroneia: the disaster of Tolmides and his men there is presented as a turning-point in their *archē*. Also, an elegiac poem discovered in the Kerameikos in Athens appears to have been composed for the Athenians who fell during the campaign. In it, the defeat is explained with the apparition of a demi-god on the side of the Boiotians, which, by implication, seems to have diminished the responsibility of the Athenian commander and his men.¹⁵ Be that as it may, to the Thebans, Koroneia was a consensual, self-evident point of reference. Put in the mouth of an esteemed member of the

¹³ This also reverberates in 3.65.2, when the intention of reinstating Plataia's traditional place in Boiotia is ascribed to "some of your [Plataia's] best citizens, men of substance from the best families."

¹⁴ See 3.67.3. The young men who entered Plataia in 431 are identified as the sons of those who fought at Koroneia. Either they grew up without their fathers, or their fathers, war heroes of the past, now lamented the death of their sons. The chiasm put Koroneia at the hinge between the generations.

¹⁵ Cf. Bowra 1938; Pritchett 1979: 89-90; SEG 10.410; 21.123; 23.41 = IG I³ 1163. Arrington 2012 now offers a full re-examination that assigns the epigram to the Battle of Delion.

local elite, evocation of the battle was something that Thucydides' audience would have found both believable and convincing when a Theban commander exhorted his troops, especially in a campaign against Athens.¹⁶

In Thucydides' history, then, the Theban response to the charge of medism brings about a complex, tripartite narrative of justification. Embarking from a general attempt to dissociate themselves from the corrupt leadership at the time of the Persian War, the Thebans claim that once they returned to lawfulness, they time and again fought for the good cause of their allies as well as the freedom of their fellow Boiotians. When the Athenians violated this freedom and sought to enslave all of Boiotia, they defeated them in the Battle of Koroneia, which restored liberty and brought lasting security to all.

Koroneia, Freedom, and Faithful Ways of Justice

This is a good moment to turn to the Battle of Koroneia itself. The event clearly marked a key moment in the generation after the Persian War. In 447 BCE, a group of exiles that later sources labelled "Orchomenizers" seized Orchomenos and Chaironeia. The term implies that the rebels were not necessarily from Orchomenos but rather "sided with the Orchomenians" or "behaved like them." Their leader Sparton apparently came from Thebes. His band was joined not only by like-minded fellow Boiotians but also by oligarchs from Euboeia and Lokris. It is thus best to see the Orchomenizers as a group of rebels from various places in central Greece who sided with a faction that was based in Orchomenos.¹⁷

The common goal of the Orchomenizers was to drive out the pro-Athenian factions from Boiotia that had been put in place a decade earlier as a result of the Battle of Oinophyta (457 BCE). The obscure nature of Boiotian affairs in the 450s makes it difficult for us to assess whether the Athenians had actually employed a policy that favoured the rise of democratic regimes, or if they simply relied on oligarchic factions that supported their cause. Either way, the rebels were determined to challenge Athens' hegemony in central Greece. The outbreak of the so-called Sacred War in 449, along with new upheavals in the Delian League in 447, connected regional affairs in Boiotia to the big picture of power politics in Aegean Greece. The situation was precarious, and the Athenians were aware of this. In an attempt to confine the uprising to western Boiotia, they sent out 1,000 hoplites plus allied contingents under Tolmides, probably in the spring of 447, to check on Orchomenos and its satellite Chaironeia. They quickly captured the latter and enslaved its population, but Orchomenos was too difficult to tackle with a force of this size.¹⁸ The main contingent, minus the garrison left at Chaironeia, therefore fell back towards Haliartos to wait for reinforcements from Thebes. But the Orchomenizers moved quickly, and the Athenians were unprepared for their strike. Somewhere in the triangle between modern

¹⁶ Cf. Larson 2007: 185-186, whose pointed observations fully endorse this interpretation.

¹⁷ Sources for the battle: Thuc. 1.113.1; Diod. 12.6; cf. Paus. 1.27.5; Plut. *Per.* 18.2. The term "Orchomenizers" appears only in Steph. Byz. s.v. Chaironeia. Under the same entry, Stephanus cites Aristophanes *BNJ* 379, who will have dealt with the issue in greater detail. Sparton: Plut. *Ages.* 19.2; Buck 1979: 150. Lokrian and Euboian exiles are mentioned in Thucydides. It is notoriously difficult to sketch the outline of events in 447 and 446. The sequence presented here follows Buck 1979: 150-152; Demand 1982: 31-40; Gehrke 1985: 168.

¹⁸ Date: *ATL* III 174 and 178, n.65; capture of Chaironeia, Buck 1979: 152.

Agios Georgios, Solinari, and Alalkomenes, in the narrow corridor that runs along the banks of Lake Kopais, Tolmides and his forces were ambushed and killed.¹⁹

The fighting revamped the entire strategic picture in central Greece. Whatever garrisons stationed in the region, they were now cut off from their supplies from Athens; hence, they were easy prey for their enemies. Within weeks, oligarchic revolutions in Euboia and Megara forced the Athenians to withdraw their contingents. In Boiotia, an agreement was reached with the Athenians, who, in return for evacuating the region, were given back their prisoners.²⁰ Yet the rebels did not leave it at that. With city after city defecting from Athens, the way was cleared for local aristocracies to embark on a new project of federal integration. Victory over the Athenians no doubt instilled in the Boiotians the sense that united they were a hard match for any invader.²¹ Inspired by their success on the battlefield and based on sentiments of ethnic togetherness, the local elites of Boiotia assembled to found a new *koinon*. The constitution of the league is well attested in the *Hellenika* from Oxyrhynchos (19 Chambers), whose author highlights the spirit of proportional representation and shared executive power. The tremendous success of the emerging “Boiotian superstate” (Cartledge 2000) is often attributed to the refined workings of its constitution. But when the league rose to power in the 440s, its initial success was not due to thoughtful integration alone. The new Boiotian Confederacy benefited from the fruitful cooperation between the local Boiotian elites who promoted the league through their social, political, and economic networks. The Battle of Koroneia both facilitated and energized this new sense of pan-Boiotian cooperation. It most surely invigorated the conversation between local oligarchic elites, many of whom had participated in the uprising against Athens. Within less than a year after the foundation of the Boiotian League, the Athenians were pressured to agree to the so-called Thirty Years Peace, which obligated them to forfeit their possessions in the Peloponnese including the harbours in the Megarid. The implications of Koroneia and the new Boiotian League for Greek history around the mid-5th century BCE can hardly be overstated.²²

Thucydides’ account of the Battle of Koroneia is notoriously short, which follows the narratological principles of the *pentekontaetia* section (1.89-117) in which the affair is couched.²³ At the same time, as we have seen, Thucydides references Koroneia three times in two different Theban speeches (3.62.5; 3.67.3; 4.92.6). It is reasonable at this point to assert that the frequent references to Koroneia betray the traces of a high-powered Theban

¹⁹ The precise location is unknown. Plutarch (*Ages.* 19.2, see also below) says it was near the Temple of Athena Itonia, which complements Paus. 1.27.5 who claims that the Athenians were on their way to Haliartos. See also the discussion of the terrain by Buckler 1996/2008: 60-62 on the topography of the second Battle at Koroneia, 394 BCE.

²⁰ Revolutions in Euboia and Megara: Thuc. 1.114, with Hornblower 1991: 184-186; evacuation of Boiotia: 1.113.3. Buck 1979: 153, infers a long list of details of the agreement between Athens and Boiotia from later actions, but much of this is conjectural. The contemporary Athenian decree *IG I² 36* honouring some men from Thespiiai relates to the turnover in one way or another: Gomme 1956: 339.

²¹ The idea is also present in Xen. *Mem.* 3.5.4, where the younger Pericles states that “the Theban disposition toward the Athenians has been strengthened [by Koroneia], so that the Boiotians who formerly would not dare to stand against the Athenians ... even in their own land, now threaten to invade Attica by themselves.”

²² The causality between Koroneia and the foundation of the new league has been pointed out by, e.g., Larson 2007: 187. On the new *koinon*, see Demand 1982: 35-40; Beck 1997: 88-96; Cartledge 2000; Mackil 2013 and 2014; Beck and Ganter 2015. Thirty Years Peace: Thuc. 1.115.1 (*StV* II 156).

²³ The guiding literary principle is selectivity, resulting from the desire to chart the growth of Athenian power; cf. Hornblower 1991: 133-134; Rood 1998: 225-248, esp. 246.

and Boiotian discourse. Near the site of the battle, in front of the “richly-built” (Bacchyl. F 15 Campbell) Temple of Athena Itonia, the Boiotian cities set up a trophy that commemorated their victory. The trophy stood there for at least two generations after the battle; it might have been in place much longer. Erected along the main road through central Boiotia and in close vicinity to one of the region’s most esteemed sanctuaries, it served as a forceful reminder of the victory to travellers and visitors to the temple alike.²⁴ The Itonion will have inspired a lively intersignification (Matthew Roller) with the victory trophy, since Athena was venerated at Koroneia as patron deity of warriors. In some traditions, she provides the Boiotians with the necessary weapons in their fight for freedom.²⁵ Various items of pottery associated with the cult show Athena in warlike guise. The most prominent of these, a black-figure *lekane* from the mid-6th century BCE, portrays an illustrious procession to the temple. Despite the overall atmosphere of frolicking and rejoicing, Athena is depicted in a belligerent manner with shield and spear held high, fit for battle.²⁶

As early as the 6th century BCE, a festival was held at the Sanctuary of Athena Itonia which commemorated the settlement of the Boiotians. Its transregional importance is attested to by Alkaios (F 325 Campbell) and Bacchylides (F 15 Campbell) who reference musical performances in connection with the festival. Most likely the celebrations were complemented by parades of hoplites and horsemen.²⁷ After 447 BCE, the new Boiotian League in all probability would have continued with this practice, with all federal forces lined up side by side: Orchomenians, Thebans, Thespians, and others. It is attractive, then, to imagine how the battle trophy, along the road to the nearby sanctuary, buttressed the tradition of Sparta, Theban leadership, and the Orchomenizing rebel gang. These details are, however, lost beyond recovery.

This does not mean that it is impossible to elucidate the milieu in which the tradition was evoked. At Thebes, as elsewhere, communal festivals provided the stage for the evocation of such traditions. Recent scholarship emphasizes the salient nature of historical discourses at polis festivals; it has become a commonplace to see those festivals as collective practices that conveyed a high currency of local meaning. Their impact on communal self-perceptions was not only that festivals suspended, in Émile Durkheim’s sense, the quotidian life of the community, but that they regulated public behaviour in ritual, including sacrifices, processions, feasts, and prayers.²⁸ Comprising the entire citizen body as well as the future generation of *politai* – the ephebes, who usually participated in cohorts of their own, the historical commemoration at polis festivals was shaped by an

²⁴ Plut. *Ages.* 19.2 (on the year 395).

²⁵ Ps.-Apollodoros 2.4.11.

²⁶ British Museum B 80, black-figured bowl of Boiotian provenance with sacrificial procession, commonly associated with Athena Itonia; c. 550 BCE. See Schachter 1981-1994: 1.119-120 and 1994/2016: 181; Kowalzig 2007: 360-364; Kaltsas and Shapiro 2008: 106-107; Paleothodoros 2016; Tufano 2019.

²⁷ Cf. Benchimol 2008; Larson 2007: 133-136, 161-162. See also Tufano 2019, who traces the *longue durée* of parades near Koroneia from early times to the Hellenistic Pamboiotia.

²⁸ My interpretation of the social function of those and related rituals builds on Burkert 1977, who, in turn, related back to Émile Durkheim. Durkheim extended the concept of suspense of everyday life to the notion of collective euphoria (“effervescence”) which empowers festival participants with the experience of belonging together and, hence, living through the basic foundations of their identity as a group. Historians and sociologists have developed this further; cf., for instance, Assmann 1997, whose definition of festivals as “Urform des kulturellen Gedächtnisses” (“archetypes of cultural memory”) builds on the celebration’s capacity to transcend everyday societal communications.

exceptional “depth of emotion,”²⁹ inviting citizens to embrace the experience of continuity in time and space.

The vectors of continuity were particularly prominent in the Theban Daphnephoria, a festival which was deeply anchored in Theban images of the past. According to Proklos (5th century CE), it was held to commemorate the deeds and achievements of the first Boiotian war leader, a certain Polematas, who was said to have instituted the festival in response to an apparition in a dream during the war against the Pelasgians. In his sleep, a young girl appeared and offered him a panoply with which he would prevail over the enemy if he performed a daphnephoric rite in honour of Apollo. By the 5th century BCE, at the latest, the war against the Pelasgians was considered a decisive moment in the settlement of Boiotia. As we have noted earlier, Thucydides attests that both their migration and habitation were highly charged topics among the Boiotians that served as robust points of reference in the political discourse of the fifth century (3.61.2, cited above). In conjunction with the procession to Thebes’ most eminent places of memory, the Daphnephoria thus promoted a narrative of primordial unity that stretched back to the times of the initial settlement. In doing so, the festival strove to connect present claims, in particular Theban leadership, with the ethnic origins of the Boiotian people.³⁰

Pindar’s odes attest that the narrative of festival celebrations was also rich in overtones of the recent past. *Isthmian* 1 praises a certain Herodotus of Thebes who won the chariot race before 458 BCE.³¹ His family belonged to the highest Theban echelon. Herodotus’ father was no other than Asopodoros, leader of the Theban cavalry who led the delivered massacre against the Megarians in the Battle of Plataia. Asopodoros, a man of “famous fortune” (line 33), is introduced in the poem as having suffered a shipwreck and come ashore at Orchomenos (lines 34-38). If the Hellenistic grammarian Didymos is correct, this piece of information could be understood metaphorically as Asopodoros having been exiled from Thebes at some point. By the time of his son’s victory, however, “the fortune of his house embarked him on the fair weather of the old days” (39-40). Indeed, the poem boldly declares that “whosoever wins bright renown, either at the games or in war, receives the highest gain in the choicest praises of citizens and of strangers” (50-51), which parallels the achievements of son and father, in the chariot race and cavalry fighting. Pindar’s praise suggests that Asopodoros’ house continued to flourish at Thebes after the Persian Wars. His role as a prominent medizer might have led to his exile for some time, possibly in the aftermath of Plataia. But by the 460s the tides had turned and Asopodoros had returned to Thebes where he was a respected war hero. Pindar’s praise illustrates that the Thebans did not stigmatize Asopodoros as medizer. In fact, the Thebans venerated his deeds in war. In all likelihood, *Isthmian* 1 mirrors his more or less unbroken prestige at

²⁹ The term was introduced in German (“Emotionstiefe historischer Erfahrung”) in Beck 2009: 75-78; cf. also Beck and Wiemer 2009: 10; Ganter 2019 (Boiotia). The concept draws strongly on Angelos Chaniotis’ work on the importance of the emotion paradigm for the study of rituals, e.g.: Chaniotis 2012.

³⁰ Proklos: *Chrestomathia* 25, with Schachter 2000/2016: 261-270. Thucydides on the Pelasgians, cf. Larson 2007: 52-66. The earliest account that elaborates on them is Ephoros *BNJ* 70 F 119 = Strab. 9.2.2-5, in which the Thebans go through multiple cycles of exile and return; see Kühr 2006: 267-268. Daphnephoria: Schachter 2000/2016.

³¹ The ode presents Thebans and Spartans as allied through the mythical figures Iolaos and Castor (lines 17, 28-31). Their cooperation was terminated when Athens took control over Boiotia in the Battle of Oinophyta in 457, which provides the terminus ante quem.

Thebes. Following his return from exile in the 460s, at the very latest, the charge of medism did little or next to nothing to bring disrepute to Asopodoros.³²

Maiden-Ode 94b, originally published as *P. Oxy.* 659 in 1904, praises another famous house at Thebes, that of the daphnephoros Agasikles. The text is very fragmentary, but clearly epichoric, in contrast to the more Panhellenic victory odes. Its agency is deeply entrenched in the festival framework of the local Daphnephoria.³³ Agasikles' family is otherwise mentioned in the literary sources. He was the son of no other than Pagondas, who we encountered earlier as boiotarch in the battle at Delion, exhorting his fellow Boiotians to be faithful to their noble spirit and defend the freedom of their country. Pagondas and his son Agasikles were descendants of the house of Aiolidas, who was elsewhere praised in Pindar's odes.³⁴ *Ode 94b* sets out to praise the "immortal glory" (line 4) of Thebes, thanks to "the all-renowned house of Aiolidas and of his son Pagondas" (lines 8-10). The text then continues to glorify Agasikles and his family (lines 38-49):

As Agasikles' honest witness, / I have come to the dance, / and for his noble
ancestors, / for their guest-friendship. For / then and still today they are
venerated / by their fellowmen / for their celebrated victories with /swift-
footed horses, / for which on the banks of famous Onchestos, and at the
acclaimed temple of Itonia / they adorned their hair with garlands, and at
Pisa ...

According to Pindar, Aiolidas' house was among the most prestigious in Thebes. For three generations, its members were held in the highest esteem by their fellowmen. In fact, extolling Agasikles and his parents, Pindar says that they were held in esteem "for the *proxenia* of their fellowmen," which recognizes their high social status in Boiotia and maybe adjacent territories.³⁵ Since Pagondas by 427 BCE was already advanced in his career (the role as leading boiotarch at Delion would make him around 50 years of age), his father Aiolidas would have flourished towards the end of the 450s. By the time of the composition of the *daphnephorikon*, Pagondas was already old enough to participate alongside his father in the military campaign recognized in the poem. As Pindar's death dates to c. 442 to 440, it is best to view the ode as one of Pindar's very latest works, dating around 445. At that time, Pagondas would have been in his early 30s and his father Aiolidas about 50. Agasikles, the boy laurel-bearer, might easily have been around 12 years of age in the mid-440s, which fits with his assigned role as a young ephebe.

With the date of the ode in place, it is tempting to fix the occasion of the "celebrated victories with swift-footed horses" (lines 44-45). The passage is sometimes taken as reference to victories in horse racing, an aristocratic pastime that fits well with the social

³² The interpretation, naturally, is debated, as is the actual identification of Asopodoros. Scholars have been divided on both questions since antiquity: see the grammarian Didymos' notes, *Schol. Isth.* 1.52 a-b. Cf. Demand 1982: 28-29 and Sevieri 1999, who both lean towards the interpretation offered here. A similar view was already propelled by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1922: 330-331.

³³ Cf. Kurke 2007 whose study of the ode delineates a characteristically Theban chorality.

³⁴ Cf. *Parth.* 1 = 94a. Pagondas has a lengthy *RE* entry: T. Lenschau, *RE* 18.2 (1942): 2313-2315, s.v. (1); cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1922: 434. The family's fame also reverberates in an unpublished inscription from Thebes from the late-5th century, see *Teiresias Epigraphica* 2017-2018: 1.

³⁵ 94b, lines 41-43; Kurke 2007: 90; Schachter 2000/2016: 258-259.

standing of Aiolidas and his house.³⁶ In light of the poem's epichoric context, such an interpretation is not necessarily compelling, nor does it preclude another reading. For Koroneia, hippic agones are not attested to independently in the Archaic and early Classical periods; although we noted how the Boiotians performed military parades there. Nearby, the sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos, on a low ridge separating the Basin of Lake Kopais from the Theban *chōra*, in the 5th century served as a regional amphictyony for the veneration of pan-Boiotian cults. We might speculate about the existence of horse races at Onchestos at the time, but there is no independent evidence for this.³⁷ With these uncertainties in mind, another reading is possible. Note that the passage is ambiguous, stating that the victories in question were commemorated in Onchestos, the Sanctuary of Athena Itonia, and at Pisa, i.e., Olympia (lines 46-49). In other words, the poem does not claim that competitions were held at those sanctuaries, but that victories were celebrated there. Like Onchestos, the precinct of Athena Itonia was considered a major regional sanctuary. Its implicit role as parade ground for the forces of the Boiotian League has already been mentioned above. In later periods, the sanctuary hosted the Pan-Boiotian games.³⁸ The notion of "fellowmen" (*amphiktyoneis*, line 43), with its strong echo of tribal bonds, emphasizes the Boiotian dimension of the achievements brought about by the house of Aiolidas, while reference to their elevated role as *proxenoi* fixes on their political standing in Thebes and beyond. Finally, reference to Olympia suggests that Aiolidas' and Pagondas' victories were proclaimed before a wider audience, possibly by means of a victory monument and other dedications.

As in Asopodoros' case (*Isthmian* 1), praise for the achievements brought about by Aiolidas and his house might have been a mingled reflection of victory both in agonistic contest and on the battlefield. The ambiguous tone of the ode, along with its epichoric setting, suggests that the poem reflects combined success at the games and in war. If praise of "celebrated victories with swift-footed horses" in 94b extolled the parents of Agasikles by alluding to military prowess, it seems obvious at this point that the only occasion upon which such fame could have been won was at the Battle of Koroneia and the succeeding raids of the Orchomenizers against Athenian strongholds in Boiotia, Lokris, Euboia, and Megara. These events predated the *daphnephorikon* by only two years or so.

It has been suggested that another ode, *Pythian* 8 in honor of Aristomenes of Aigina (446 BCE), also offers a reflection of the Battle of Koroneia, although the reference there is made in a more encrypted manner: Porphyryon, king of the Attic deme of Athmonon and identified with the leader of the giants, is struck dead by the bow of Apollo. If the identification of Porphyryon and Apollo as Athenian and Theban wildcards is correct, then *Pythian* 8 further supports the idea that Pindar had fully picked up on the theme of victory over Athens. The frame of reference would have been the same as that of Agasikles' *daphnephorikon*.³⁹ Such a context fully explains the "immortal glory" that shone on Thebes in *Ode* 94b (line 4): although the Orchomenizers had recruited rebel contingents from all over Boiotia and beyond, the Thebans persistently claimed leadership (partial or, as time elapsed, full) both in the manoeuvre itself and in the Boiotian League that was established

³⁶ E.g., Larson 2007: 133-134; Schachter 1981-1994: 2.219-220. Kurke 2007: 90-91 also suggests athletic victories, but not without noticing the emphasis that is put on Boiotia. If this reading is correct, we note that the regional contests of Onchestos and Koroneia are mentioned before the Olympic crown.

³⁷ Schachter 1981-1994: 2.207-221, citing Pind. *Isth.* 1.52-54 as evidence. The reference is inconclusive.

³⁸ Schachter 1981-1994: 1.117-127.

³⁹ Cf. lines 10-20, where Porphyryon is overthrown. A Boiotian audience might have been compelled to draw an analogy with current affairs, cf. Lefkowitz 1977; Burton 1962: 175-177; Burnett 2005: 225-238.

following the uprising. The later sections of 94b, although severely damaged, recount the “hateful and unrelenting strife” that had arisen in Boiotia, “yet he (they?) cherished the faithful ways of justice” (lines 63-65). This juxtaposition of strife and, by implication, disunity on the one hand and the commitment to lawfulness on the other might also refer to the turmoil in the decades prior to Koroneia, when the Boiotians were deeply divided: between medizers and Hellenic loyalists and, after 457, between pro-Athenian factions and those who supported a more traditional course of alignment with Sparta. We are thus led to think that their grievances were resolved through military victory and the foundation of the new Boiotian League, which was built on the “faithful ways of justice.”⁴⁰

The Battle of Koroneia: New Bridges across Old Divisions

In conclusion, both Thucydides and Pindar attest to the eminent role the Battle of Koroneia played in the regional discourse in Boiotia. Victory on the battlefield not only allowed the Theban elites to promote their newly discovered prosperity, but to reference Koroneia in support of their claims for leadership among their fellow Boiotians. We detect here the same lively interplay of interests and identities between the city of Thebes and the rest of the *ethnos* that is so characteristic of affairs in Boiotia.

In other corners of the country, the Koroneia narrative must have resonated differently. It is futile to suggest one authoritative account, engrained with one trajectory of meaning. Despite the common regional frame of reference, there will have been significant local variation. In Thespiiai, for instance, the local discourse environment will have invited a different point of view. Thespiiai and Thebes had parted ways as early as the Battle of Thermopylai. Soon after the Persian War, the city opened its citizen registers to enrol new *politai* mostly from Athens to compensate for the blood toll of the major battles (Hdt. 8.75.1). Subsequently, the new Thespian citizen body was careful not to be lumped in with the camp of Boiotian medizers.⁴¹ Despite these profound differences between Thespiiai and the rest of Boiotia, Thespiiai became a founding member of the new federal league. After the Battle of Koroneia, the city took on the role as mediator between Athens and Thebes. This difficult stretch illustrates how Koroneia enabled the Boiotians to build new bridges across old divisions. When the Thespiians joined the league, they were granted the same weight of proportional representation in the federal council as Thebes and Orchomenos, which further highlights the idea of reconciliation. Koroneia thus brought together the different camps in Boiotia and inspired them to overcome long-term regional rivalries.⁴²

For the Thebans, on the other hand, the dominant theme in this conversation was the stigma of medism and the attempt to overcome its legacy. It is intriguing to see how they managed. After a period of perplexity, if not apprehension, they were eager to dissociate

⁴⁰ In similar vein, Schachter 2000/2016: 260. Beyond its commitment to the principle of proportional representation, the new Boiotian League managed to contain traditional rivalries between Thebes and Orchomenos: each of them was awarded the same weight in the league’s administration (two out of nine shares in 447), which might have been viewed as both “faithful” and “just”.

⁴¹ SEG 31.358 with Beck 2014: 38-41.

⁴² Cf. Schachter 1996. Polygnotos of Thasos, famous for his murals in Athens and elsewhere, also visited Thespiiai and painted works in the public sphere: Plin. *Nat.* 35.40. Were these historical paintings, similar to his works in the Stoa Poikile on the Athenian agora?

themselves from the actions of Attaginos and his group. In all likelihood, affairs in Thebes and on the battlefield itself were so intricate that there was enough room for such a move. Plutarch, in *The Malice of Herodotus*, claimed that the 400 Thebans at Thermopylai were actually true patriots who had fought independently of Attaginos' regime, volunteering for the Greek cause (32). A few lines earlier, he explained that, in the early stages of the Persian invasion, 500 Thebans led by a certain Mnamias took part in the allied expedition to Tempe in Thessaly to establish a first line of defence (31). Hence, while Attaginos and his gang medized, the 'true' Theban position was that of loyalty and support of the Hellenic cause.

Scholars have been puzzled about what to make of Plutarch. Both notes from *The Malice of Herodotus* (31 and 32) might have ultimately derived from the local Boiotian historian Aristophanes, whose comments on Herodotus' request for bribes from the Thebans (see above) survive through the same treatise. While some scholars reject the notion of a Theban Tempe contingent, others suggest a struggle within Thebes between pro- and anti-Persian factions in which Attaginos, ultimately, gained the upper hand. If this was the case, then the Theban platoon at Thermopylai might indeed have consisted of men who opposed their home regime and fought against Persia on their own account – hence, a dissociation from Thucydides' medizing gang.⁴³ A third possibility would have been that the Thebans, as Xerxes trekked south, simply changed their minds: geopolitical exposure on the corridor into central Greece made them particularly vulnerable to a Persian attack; hence, the attempt to reconcile. Despite all scholarly attempts to gauge these variants, appreciate subtleties of reason and causality, and, effectively, restore an authoritative picture, we should be frank enough and concede that this cannot be done. There are too many vagaries.

It is questionable, and worthwhile to ponder, just how reprehensible the Theban course of action was at the very moment the decision was made to medize. Notions of "siding" or "working with the Mede" had been well established since the later 6th century BCE. Referencing prevailing power relations with Persia in Asia Minor, there is little to suggest that medism bore the traits of deep deception, let alone moral betrayal of the Greek cause. Due to the freedom ideology of the Hellenic Alliance, the meaning of the term changed both quickly and profoundly after Plataia, when medism became a key entry in the Greek vocabulary of cultural othering. Steamrolled by the new semantics, the Thebans soon became the most notorious medizers. Once *mēdizein* had obtained the quality of an inflammatory accusation, the room for narrative encounters with nuance and complexity dwindled. In response to the universal stigma, the Thebans deployed their own narrative, or a new narrative perspectivation, one that was equally geared toward generalization: they fostered their own freedom narrative.⁴⁴ The great advantage of that narrative – the fight for the freedom of all Hellenes on the battlefield near Koroneia – allowed the Thebans to embrace, and immerse themselves in, the prevailing Hellenic discourse of the day, that is, the omnipresent, self-evident, and unchallengeable call for freedom. They were the new champions of *eleutheria*. In Thebes, the assessment of the Battle of Koroneia thus adhered to a universal theme, brought about and packaged in deeply local sentiments and experiences.

⁴³ The debate was recently summarized by Steinbock 2013: 103-105, with ample reference to previous scholarship.

⁴⁴ See also the contribution by Chandra Giroux to this volume who detects similar traces of a Theban freedom-narrative in Diodorus' recollection (4.10.2-4) of a mythical war between Thebans and Orchomenians.

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