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Periplous thinking: Herodotus' Libyan logos and the Greek Mediterranean

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The article presents an analysis of Herodotus' *Libyan logos* and aims to reconstruct a fundamental spatial model based on the Mediterranean Sea. The analysis will demonstrate that Herodotus presents the Mediterranean coastline as a dynamic and fruitful ground for constant interactions between different ethnic groups and characterizes it as a lively network of cultural exchanges and influences. The article offers to read Herodotus' descriptions of foreign lands through a Mediterranean perspective, which can better capture his spatial representations than polarizing paradigms, such as Europe–Asia, Greeks–barbarians, of previous scholarship.

Keywords: Herodotus; ancient Mediterranean; Libya; *Libyan logos*; ancient spaces; networks

This article aims to reconstruct a fundamental spatial model found in Herodotus' geographical and ethnographical discussions, and to affirm that Herodotus' accounts of foreign lands express the central role of the Mediterranean Sea within the spatial perception of Greek society. I will argue that the main spatial principle found in Herodotus is less concerned with the division of the earth into (two or three) continents, or with the oppositions between Greeks and non-Greeks (barbarians), but rather focuses on the position of the Mediterranean Sea at the centre of the Earth and on the multidirectional networks it holds. The overall picture is one that presents the Mediterranean coastline as a dynamic and fruitful ground for interaction between discrete groups of different peoples. Although Herodotus is keen to point out the peculiarities and oddities of foreign lands and peoples, he in fact describes the Mediterranean shores as a 'region', characterized by a network of cultural appropriations and social influences.

This is not to say that Herodotus is indifferent to relations between Greeks and Barbarians, or that he does not regard them as ethnographically and culturally distinct from each other. On the contrary, the famous opening lines of the *Histories* (Hdt. 1.1) established the meta-narrative of the book: an inquiry that seeks to understand and bring forth the great deeds of Greeks and barbarians and the reasons they waged war, using the literary oppositional formula 'μὲν-δὲ' (τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι – 'some displayed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians'). This article argues that, while these are indeed Herodotus' objectives, the spatial model that stands at the foundation of his spatial perceptions is one based not on a bipolar separation (i.e., Greeks/barbarians, or Europe/Asia), but rather on a maritime model centred in the Mediterranean Sea.

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The suggested name for this Mediterranean spatial model – the Maritime Mediation Model – stems from the claim that the Mediterranean Sea was perceived by the Greeks as a maritime space, situated at the centre of the Earth and functioning as a cultural mediator between various peoples and places. According to this interpretation, the Mediterranean basin functioned as the centre of human activity; it was perceived as a manifestation of nature's balanced climate and it enabled a high level of multicultural interactions and influences.

After a short presentation of contemporary spatial theories and a survey of the relevant scholarship regarding the geography of Herodotus, this article will present a spatial analysis of Herodotus' account of Libya, the *Libyan logos* (Hdt. 4. 147–199), and will offer a reconstruction of the Maritime Mediation Model. An analysis of other geo-ethnic digressions in Herodotus, such as the Egyptian and Scythian *logoi* (Hdt. 2.35–99, 4.1–82), would lead to a similar conclusion but are beyond the scope of this article.[1] The decision to focus on the *Libyan logos*, and not on the better-known Egyptian and Scythian ones, lies in the fact that, while it is less studied, it is characterized by an organized spatial and ethnographic presentation and can therefore serve as a suitable case study for the questions this paper wishes to examine.

Before continuing, one last remark is appropriate: much has been written over the last generation on the polyphony found in Herodotus' writings, and his description of foreign lands is no exception. The *Histories* represent many different voices, and it is sometimes impossible to extract one solid and coherent narrative or thesis. Likewise, the scholarship on Herodotus is complex in its breadth and scope (see below), and it is therefore important to stress that I do not claim that only one spatial model is present in the *Histories*, but rather propose that thinking about space centred on the Mediterranean can illuminate a fundamental spatial representation found in Herodotus.

Spatial models and spatial theory

A spatial model is a comprehensive cognitive model that fashions the ways in which geographic and cultural space are perceived. Within the framework of a specific spatial model, geographical, cultural and ethnographical data are recorded, interpreted and organized in a coherent and meaningful structure. The concept is based on the assumption that every society perceives space via a culturally conditioned conceptual framework that gives meaning to the geographical and ethnographical data perceived by the senses or obtained through any form of knowledge acquisition. The spatial model is constructed as much from mental and mythical building blocks as from empirical and scientific ones. Uncovering the model lying at the base of any society's space perception sheds crucial light on a wide range of historical, ethnographical and social questions.[2]

Traditionally, historians have treated space as an empirical entity, seen as a static container that held human activities, a frozen landscape that lacked any social or cultural origins or meanings. Space was perceived as Cartesian and absolute, a thing that can be described using Euclidian geometry.[3] Within the framework of modern thought – and especially since the industrial revolution and the rise of the modern state – space has become even less important, and has been wholly subordinated to the concept of time. This trend reached its peak with the historicist mode of thought, which was based on the notion of linear time: the past was seen as a linear progression through phases (from savagery to civilization, from simplicity to complexity, from darkness to light). Thinkers such as Hegel, Marx and Toynbee offered teleological and sweeping historical

accounts that did not leave room for spatial issues or for the contingency of social behaviour.[4]

The last two decades have witnessed a conceptual and methodological renaissance in the field of geography. The discipline that suffered from a long lasting image as a trivial, empirical and descriptive science has become a dynamic and innovative field that deeply influences other disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, literature, psychology and more.[5] These new attitudes towards space are generally known as 'the spatial turn', and view human beings as engaged in constant socio-spatial dialectics: space is not a natural given system, but rather a social product, which forms and reforms in the social and ideological environment.[6] The acknowledgement of the social and cultural features of space was a long process that became a significant movement only in the last twenty to thirty years. Among its forebears was the Chicago School, which analysed the urban environment of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s.[7] Another important spatial analysis can be found in the works of the Annales School, especially in the writings of Fernand Braudel. By examining spatial features in long historical cycles (*la longue durée*), Braudel abandoned the traditional treatment of space and realized its long-term social and cultural influences. In this way, he was able to look beyond the 'froth' of political events – the main focal point of historicism.[8]

Starting in the 1960s, some new attitudes towards space began to form with the works of Lefebvre, Foucault, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Lacan and Derrida. These postmodern thinkers articulated new understandings of the complex relations between space, time and society, and introduced new spatial terms such as *heterotopia* and *simulacra*.[9] Their discussions on the social production of space formulated novel approaches and concepts regarding the relations between human societies and the environment.

The treatment of space elaborated and developed during the late 1980s, when various scholars began using spatial analysis to understand a wide range of human activities, such as day-to-day life, the construction of shared identities, control and oppression mechanisms, historical processes, urban growth, economic and cultural change, globalization and many more. The spatial turn is not a closed school restricted to a specific group of scholars, but rather reflects a shift in research paradigms: the understanding that human beings are simultaneously the products and the producers of both space and time. Today, space can no longer be seen as the backdrop of human history, but rather as a conceptual construction that is deeply connected to human experience, social structures and human modes of perception. Society defines for its members not only ethical, religious and social concepts, but also a spatial model that fashions the way space is being understood and experienced.

The field of ancient history and literature has only recently opened itself to the ideas of spatial analysis. Traditionally, scholars who addressed the subject of ancient geography perpetuated the old attitudes towards space and presented a 'History of Geography'. These studies discuss the geographic knowledge reflected in the ancient sources, the titles of the works, the literary genre of geographic writings, ancient cartography and the relations between geography and history in Antiquity.[10] The treatment of the first Greek geographers (that is, Anaximander and Hecataeus, both from Miletus) is usually very limited, consisting mainly of a short presentation of the limited information known today about their writings. These short surveys lead to a binary spatial model consisting of a round, disc-like Earth, which holds two continents: Europe and Asia (as in the titles of their books). Libya, the ancient Africa, was added at a later stage and remained significantly smaller. The focus on the division into continents

frequently overshadows other spatial perceptions, such as the fundamental role of the Mediterranean Sea in the Greek mindset.

A recent book by Daniela Dueck provides an up-to-date survey of ancient Greek geography, including a discussion on archaic descriptive geography in Greek epic, mythology, historiographic tradition, travelogues and curiosities.[11] Dueck broadens the scope of geography into the realm of poetry, epic narratives and mythology. She writes, for example: 'The Homeric epics can thus be used to assess the general limits of geographic knowledge, beyond which mythic notions took over.'[12] Thus, Dueck investigates the limits of geographic knowledge in the Archaic age, allowing a better understanding of the mechanisms of knowledge transfer. However, one could extract even more cultural insights by asking what spatial constructions lay at the foundations of the Homeric mythological geography, or what the paradigmatic differences between concrete and mythological geographies were. These kinds of questions, which are at the heart of the new attitudes towards space, are today challenged by scholars such as Romm, Strauss-Clay and Malkin (see below).

Recent years have brought forth some new spatial approaches to the history of ancient Greek and Rome, which have been rapidly multiplying. James Romm, in his book *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*, discusses the mental construction of space through the concept of the edges of the Earth (*peirata gaies*), and introduces new spatial-cultural concepts to the field of ancient history.[13] In a recent paper, Romm claims that two competing spatial models governed the Greek geographical discourse: one presenting a binary division of the Earth (Europe and Asia), the other a tripartite division (Europe, Asia, and Libya).[14] These clams will be discussed shortly.

Other studies present fresh attitudes towards space in Antiquity; they include Jenny Strauss-Clay's recent book, *Homer's Trojan Theater*, which focuses on the visual poetics of the *Iliad* as envisioned by the poet, thus suggesting new ways of approaching ancient narratives: not only with one's ear, but also with one's eyes.[15] In an earlier study, *The Politics of Olympus*, Strauss-Clay analysed the four major *Homeric Hymns* and examined their basic thematic patterns, some of which are constituted from spatial features (especially the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*).[16] Another example is Alex Purves' *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative*, which offers a survey of the concept of narrative in ancient Greece, and discusses the manifestation of spatial perceptions within the texts.[17] Purves also dedicates a discussion to maps and prose narratives, and demonstrates the minimal role that cartography plays in Herodotus' work.[18] Other scholars who have applied spatial theory to ancient Greek and Roman history are Katherine Clarke, Jonas Grethlein, William Hutton, Claude Nicolet and Christos Tsagalis.[19] Naturally, Herodotus' *Histories* has also received new spatial treatments, which will be discussed below.

An important research field – and one that is highly relevant to the spatial interpretation of Herodotus – is the field of Mediterranean studies, and specifically, the idea of the Mediterranean as a space of connectivity that enables multidirectional networks of interactions. The field of Mediterranean studies, established by Fernand Braudel, has grown in popularity over the last two decades. *The Corrupting Sea* by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell came to be a milestone in the field. In it, the authors offered historical research on the Mediterranean and its coastline over some three thousand years, from prehistory to the end of the first millennium AD and established the concepts of connectivity and micro-regions.[20]

A further conceptual addition to the field of Mediterranean studies is Irad Malkin's *A Small Greek World*, which introduced network theory into the research of ancient

Greek history. Malkin argues that the various Greek communities throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea functioned as maritime networks: in spite of the vast distances that separated them, Greek cities demonstrated network dynamics and a high level of connectivity. Malkin claims that the Greek world had no 'core' or 'centre', but rather various multidirectional hubs (nodes) and lines along the shores of the sea. The network feature of the Greek world was a chief agent in the constructions of shared social, political and religious identities.[21]

Over the last few years, the field of Mediterranean studies has been experiencing a boom of innovative publications. David Abulafia has offered a fresh perspective on the Mediterranean by focusing on the sea itself throughout human history in his *The Great Sea*.[22] Christy Constantakopolou has presented an analysis of Greek history by investigating it through the concept of insularity.[23] A recent study by Denise Demetriou seeks to explain what happened when different groups came into contact across the ancient Mediterranean and reveals new aspects of identity construction, not only ethnic identity, but also other types of collective consciousness that are often overlooked, such as civic, linguistic, religious and social identities.[24] Cyprian Broodbank has presented an interpretive synthesis on the rise of the Mediterranean world from its beginnings to the threshold of Classical times. It includes an archaeological and historical account of the rise of ancient Mediterranean civilizations, including Egyptian, Minoan, Mycenaean, Phoenician, Etruscan, early Greek and pan-Mediterranean cultures.[25] Thomas Tartaron has contributed to the field by presenting a reassessment of the maritime world of the Mycenaean Greeks of the Late Bronze Age.[26] The new concepts of connectivity, insularity, network dynamics and cross-cultural interactions throughout the ancient Mediterranean lead to a re-examination and reassessment of Herodotus account of foreign lands and people.

Scholarly attitudes towards Herodotus' geography and ethnography

Herodotus' *Histories* are a rich source for geographical, ethnographical and spatial perceptions. Herodotus discusses many such issues, including the structure of the Earth, the number of its continents, the routes of great rivers, the typical fauna and flora of each land and the characteristics of peoples inhabiting different regions of the Earth.

Contemporary scholarship on Herodotus' spatial issues offers different approaches to the subject. Henry Immerwahr, for example, emphasizes the importance of natural boundaries in Herodotus' narrative, especially the disastrous outcomes that followed vain attempts by tyrants to change the course of rivers (and other bodies of water) in order to conquer foreign lands.[27] Another example is Thomas Harrison's interpretation of Herodotus' geo-ethnic digressions as a rhetorical means for establishing his main thesis regarding the Persian imperial ambitions.[28] Tim Rood, on the other hand, stresses the monumental intellectual endeavour represented by Herodotus' geographic and ethnographic descriptions, which point to both similarities and differences between Greeks and non-Greeks. In a recent paper, Rood examines the narratological treatment of space in Herodotus through the concepts of spatial levels, literary style, cartographic and hodological spaces and focalization, thus demonstrating the variety of Herodotus' treatment of space, as well as his ambivalence with regard to patterns of imperialism.[29]

Rosalind Thomas, in her study *Herodotus in Context*, examines Herodotus' *Histories* within the context of the intellectual climate of the mid- to late-fifth century BC.[30] Thomas focuses on Herodotus' descriptions of Egypt, Scythia and Libya, as well as on his accounts of the wonders of nature and his methods of convincing his

audiences, regarding these as part of the world of scientific inquiry and controversy more familiar from the natural philosophers and medical works of the time.

An innovative digital mapping project, named *Hestia*, has recently been introduced by Elton Barker, Stefan Bouzarovski, Chris Pelling and Leif Isaksen.[31] The project employs digital technology and has developed an innovative methodology for the study of spatial data in Herodotus' *Histories*. Using a digital text of Herodotus to capture all the place-names mentioned in the narrative, these scholars constructed a database to store that information and represent it in a series of mapping applications, thus contributing to the investigation of the ways in which geography is represented in the *Histories*.

Alongside these recent approaches, the most common and well-known reading of Herodotus' geo-ethnic digressions focuses on the dichotomies between Greeks and barbarians, though they have suffered from growing criticism over the last few years. Following the important work of Emmanuel Levinas, who pointed out the social and cultural processes involved in constructing group identities as an ongoing exclusion of non-dominant groups (such as slaves, women, children, etc.), the category of 'alterity' had become a common concept in Classical studies.[32] Since *The Mirror of Herodotus* by François Hartog, and more recently R.V. Munson, many historical studies have focused on the construction of Greek identity as a bipolar structure founded upon the concept of alterity.[33] Whether the origins of the concept are rooted in the Persian wars, as suggested by Edith Hall, or in the rise of the Athenian empire and the civil ideology that accompanied it, as suggested by David Konstan, the bipolar identity model has been widely accepted by many scholars.[34]

In spite of its wide acceptance, the bipolar ethnic model has received significant opposition. For example, Jonathan Hall, a pioneer in the field of ancient Greek ethnicity, has argued that the chief principle for ethnic identity in Greek communities was based on inter-Hellenic tribal orientations, and not on the distinction between Greeks and barbarians.[35] Hall argues that a pan-Hellenic identity took root among the Greek aristocracy through institutions such as the Olympic games, which created alliances between privileged families. This concept of ethnicity, based on regional and communal identity accompanied by a social consciousness, is very different from a dichotomous model such as Greek vs. barbarians. Another opposition to the Greek barbarian polarity is Christopher Pelling's 'East is East and West is West'. Pelling criticizes Hartog's alterity model and demonstrates that Herodotus uses the polarity of Greeks and barbarians (especially Persians), to establish a complex identity structure, one that finds the 'Self in Other and Other in Self'.[36]

A recent criticism of the concept of alterity in Greek history can be found in Erich Gruen's *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Gruen demonstrates that the ancient Greek, Romans and Jews found similarities to foreign peoples, such as Egyptians, Phoenicians, Ethiopians and Gauls, rather than contrasts, that they expressed admiration for the achievements of other societies, and that they discerned, and even invented, kinship relations and shared roots with diverse peoples.[37] In this context, it is worth mentioning Irad Malkin's *The Returns of Odysseus*, which demonstrates that Greek myths served as a cultural mediator between immigrant groups that met in Archaic Italy.[38] Malkin's conclusions lead to the understanding that Greek identity was constructed through a dialectic process that included other cultures and communities, and not through a process of oppositional ethnicity.

A recent contribution to the deconstruction of the bipolar identity model is Kostas Vlassopoulos' *Greek and Barbarians*, which discusses interactions between Greeks and

non-Greeks in the Mediterranean world during the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.[39] Instead of traditional distinctions between Greeks and Others, Vlassopoulos explores the diversity of interactions between Greeks and non-Greeks in four categories: networks, *apoikiai* (colonies), the pan-Hellenic world and the world of empires. These diverse interactions set in motion processes of globalization, and the emergence of a shared material and cultural *koine* across the Mediterranean was accompanied by the diverse ways in which Greek and non-Greek cultures adopted and adapted elements of this global shared culture.

In many cases, the bipolar identity construction goes hand in hand with a bipolar spatial model that focuses on the dichotomic separation between Europe and Asia as a geographical manifestation of the dichotomy – Greeks vs. barbarians. Edith Hall, for example says:

> The Ionian geographer Hecataeus had conceived the world as divided into two vast continents, Europe and Asia (the titles of the two books of his Periegesis), and the division of human civilization ever after to be symbolized by the Persians wars is established on a geographical plane.[40]

While the identity bipolar construction is today suffering from a decline in popularity, it still appears to be quite secure in the field of ancient geography. One can find explicit and implicit spatial treatments, which assume a dichotomous differentiation between Europe and Asia, East and West, in studies regarding the Orientalizing movement, cross-cultural influences, the colonization movement, Greek science and many more. In spite of the rise in studies dealing with Mediterranean cross-cultural connectivity, it is still very common to find a paradigmatic bipolar geo-ethnic model dividing the earth into Europe vs. Asia and Greek vs. barbarians. This tendency includes contemporary treatments of Herodotus' geography and ethnography.

A widely held view, which could be regarded as the traditional opinion among scholars, is that Herodotus perceived the world through continental divisions. The origin of this opinion lies in works of Herodotus' predecessor Hecataeus of Miletus (560–480 BC), who is regarded as the first professional geographer in the Greek world.[41] Hecataeus wrote a work traditionally titled *Periodos ges* (literally, 'a road around the earth'), and also produced an improved version of Anaximander of Miletus' map of the earth.[42] Of the approximately 330 existing fragments of Hecataeus, almost 80% come from the lexicon of Stephanus of Byzantium (sixth century AD) and therefore mostly contain only the bare enumeration of cities together with concise entries on location. Additional material can be gained from Herodotus; Hecataeus is the only one of his sources he cites by name (2.143,1; 6.137), and no doubt was the most authoritative geographer in the time of Herodotus.[43]

Hecataeus' description followed a coastal geographical order encircling the Mediterranean shorelines and was arranged in two books, one devoted to Europe, the other to Asia. The books were accordingly named *Europe* and *Asia.*[44] Hecataeus did not recognize Africa as a separate continent and his impressions of Egypt belong to the survey of Asia. The common assumption that Hecataeus' geographical work was arranged in two books (see below), titled with the names of the two continents, led to the general opinion that this division reflected his main principle of geographical organization, thus overshadowing the fundamental organizing principle of his work, which was the costal description of the Mediterranean shorelines.

As said above, Hecataeus' *Periodos ges* followed an unmistakable organizing principle: a description along the shores. While his depiction generally followed the

coasts, it occasionally penetrated into the interior, sometimes even to the edge of the Earth. The description started from Spain and proceeded to Europe, Asia, Egypt and North Africa, and then returned to the 'Pillars of Heracles'. The work gave a current general view of the knowledge of the Earth and its inhabitants, listing peoples, tribes, borders, cities, rivers, mountains and so forth.

This costal description correlated to the most common literary genre for geographical description in the Greek world, known as *periplous* (περίπλους).[45] These writings offered a description of a sea voyage along the coast and, in addition to explicit logbooks, many *periploi* were written as handbooks: these were limited to purely nautical issues and recorded such features as harbour sites and points of anchorage, distances covered, climatic factors and local peculiarities. The development of *periplous*-style literature reflects the significance of ancient voyages of discovery.[46] Although Hecataeus' work was more geographic in nature, emphasizing the topography of the shoreline and sometimes inland territories, it still followed the organizing principle of the *periplous* description. The Earth, as reflected in Hecataeus, was structured around the sea, and not through a continental division into two continents.

Moreover, the tendency to segment a work into separate books was a late literary development, usually found in the Hellenistic period, and there is not enough evidence to argue convincingly that Hecataeus' perception of the earth was founded upon continental divisions. (There is even an erroneous testimony from Callimachus declaring that the title *Asia* for Hecataeus' second book was a late fabrication.)[47] As mentioned above, almost 80% of Hecataeus' surviving fragments originate from the geographical lexicon of Stephanus of Byzantium, which was written more than 1000 years after the days of Hecataeus.[48] In light of the existing evidence, it is much more reasonable to assume that Hecataeus followed a maritime spatial model rather than a terrestrial one.

The problematic character of the bipolar spatial model is evident not only in ancient texts but also from a brief glance at a map of the Aegean Sea. From Minoan and Mycenaean times, Greek communities settled along the Aegean shores and islands with no distinguished differentiation between its European and Asiatic shores. The various Greek cities created a long continuity of settlements running on both sides of the Aegean, including its islands, the Bosporus and the Sea of Marmara, which were regarded as a physical boundary between Europe and Asia. Could one speak of a paradigmatic bipolar model separating Europe from Asia if the heart of the Greek world stretches out as a long band of settlements encompassing both shores? This question was ignored by previous analyses.

Hecataeus' (presumed) emphasis on the continental division into Asia and Europe continues to have significant influence on the current scholarly discourse dealing with ancient geography, ethnography and identity construction, insofar as it renders the treatise a latent paradigm. Instead of focusing on the Mediterranean littoral, as the ancient geographers did, many scholars focus on the separation into continents as the fundamental spatial principle. The treatment of ethnographic and cultural issues has more then once been perceived as a dichotomic structure of Greeks vs. barbarians, which is a reflection of the well-established dichotomy between Europe and Asia – a bipolar model that supposedly went back to the days of Hecataeus. This dichotomic continental model can be seen in many studies dealing with Greek geography, ethnography and the construction of pan-Hellenic identity.[49]

When studying Herodotus, we no longer need to rely on late fragments and testimonies. On several occasions, Herodotus presents the dispute of his time regarding the Earth's structure, the number of continents it comprises and their shapes and

boundaries. In 4.36, for example, he scorns his predecessors, who produced symmetrical maps of the world, drawn 'as round as if fashioned by compasses, encircled by the Ocean river, and Asia and Europe of a like extent'.[50] Herodotus explicitly criticizes the division of the Earth into two symmetrical continents, which presumably was the view widely accepted in his day. Surprisingly enough, however, he also expresses his disapproval of a threefold division (Hdt. 4.42):

> I wonder, then, at those who have mapped out and divided the world into Libya, Asia, and Europe; for the difference between them is great, seeing that in length Europe stretches along both the others together, and it appears to me to be wider beyond all comparison.

And once again in 4.45, where he criticizes the names ascribed to the continents and their accepted boundaries. It is clear that Herodotus did not wholly accept that the Earth, 'which is one', is divided into three symmetrical parts.

Not only the number of continents, but also the location of their boundaries was undergoing debate during Herodotus' time. The traditional (so-called Ionian) opinion was that the Earth was divided into two continents separated by the River Phasis, believed to flow west into the eastern end of the Black Sea. Alongside the Mediterranean Sea, the Phasis was seen to create a horizontal, north–south division of the earth. In Herodotus' time, a new world picture developed, in which the earth was divided into three continents, their boundaries set along the River Tanais (the modern Don, flowing southward into the Sea of Azov) and the Nile, thus creating an east–west division of the Earth.[51] The various references to these issues, given by Herodotus within his geographical descriptions, indicate primarily that questions concerning the Earth's structure stood at the heart of a heated and lively discussion. Despite his statement in 4.36, cited above, Herodotus was probably more at ease with the traditional twofold division; his two long ethnographic descriptions on the Egyptians (2.1–98) and the Scythians (4.1–82) correspond to the Ionian symmetry of north–south, as does his treatment of the Nile–Ister symmetry.[52] It seems that James Romm is correct to argue that:

> 'the basic opposition of cold and hot, correlating with the winds Boreas and Notos, and the landmasses Europe and Asia/Libya, stands out for Herodotus as the defining axis of global structure, as it seems to have done for Anaximander and Hecataeus before him'.[53]

Herodotus' *Histories* reflect, therefore, an ongoing professional debate that focused on the number of continents, their shapes and their borders. These discussions obviously went hand in hand with the main narrative of Herodotus' story – the Persian Wars. The dichotomous divisions of the Earth go well with paradigmatic bipolar perceptions, introduced by Herodotus more than once, of Greeks vs. barbarians, and especially of Greeks vs. Persians.

Although the bipolar spatial theme does exist in the *Histories*, it is important to note that it does not exclude other, more flexible, spatial and ethnographical perceptions. The debate on the number and shape of the continents did not govern, nor did it contradict, the fundamental rule of the Mediterranean Sea as a space of connectivity and cross-cultural exchanges situated at the centre of the world. A Mediterranean spatial model offered a flexible framework for the Greeks, a mental spatial system that corresponded with the historical developments of Greek civilization, mainly, the exploration and colonization movements and cross-Mediterranean relations.[54]

As stated above, this article argues that thinking about space centred on the Mediterranean captures the spatial representations in Herodotus more aptly than does the polarizing East–West paradigm of previous scholarship. Alongside the examination

of Herodotus' geo-ethnic discussions as an example of contemporary disputes concerning the number of the continents and their boundaries, an alternative approach is suggested – one that offers a spatial model based on a concentric model centred in the Mediterranean, demonstrating a maritime perspective and embodying flexible attitudes towards the various peoples inhabiting the Mediterranean littoral. According to this interpretation, the Mediterranean basin functioned in the Greek mindset as the centre of the world, a hub for human activity and a manifestation of nature's balanced climate. As one turned one's back to the sea and advanced inland, the climate, topography and people became increasingly hostile and bizarre. Eventually, one reached the ultimate wasteland at the edges of the Earth.[55] Within the framework of this approach, the continental separations and the relations between Greeks and barbarians are understood as debates within a paradigmatic spatial model – that of the Mediterranean Sea.

Thinking of the Mediterranean Sea as the heart of the Greek spatial model should not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with Greek history. The geographic genre of the *Periplous*, which was the main geographic genre in Archaic and Classical times, was organized around the sea, and the coastline was an obvious point of interconnectivity for the Greeks, as evidenced by their own geography, economy and settlement patterns. The analysis of the *Libyan logos* will serve to portray and demonstrate this spatial perception.

The *Libyan logos*

In the course of book 4, Herodotus presents a long discussion on the Greek colony Cyrene and on the lands of Libya. He dedicates chapters 147–67 to the foundation stories and political evolution of Cyrene and chapters 168–99 to a survey of the lands of Libya, thus offering a description of the land's geography, climate, topography and ethnography. An analysis of these paragraphs evokes a spatial model based on the Mediterranean Sea and the multicultural networks it held at the time. The Mediterranean coastline is presented as a dynamic and fruitful ground for interaction between ethnic groups and as a region characterized by a network of cultural appropriations and social influences. The discussion offered here will follow Herodotus' account of Libya, and will present a close analysis of the text, which will conclude in the articulation of a Mediterranean spatial model: the Maritime Mediation Model.

Herodotus begins his discussion of Libya with the foundation story of Cyrene by the people of Thera (147–58), and then moves on to deal with political strife in the new colony (159–67). The description offers many insights into the Greek colonization movement, the varying political circumstances in Sparta, Thera and Cyrene and the unique role of Delphi within the process of exploration and colonization. For the purpose of this article, it is important to note that the description presents the Mediterranean space as a lively network of commercial and political interactions that encompasses large parts of the Mediterranean shoreline. Within these passages, Herodotus mentions various place-names, both Greek and non Greek: Thera, Sparta, Delphi, Crete, the Island Platea (now called Bomba, east of Cyrene), Samos, Egypt, Tartessus (beyond the Pillars of Heracles), several place-names near Cyrene (Aziris, Irasa), Cyprus and Cnidus. In addition, He refers to the Greeks as a whole, once when mentioning the Pythian oracle calling all Greeks to settle in Cyrene in 4.159 ('the Pythian priestess warned all Greeks by an oracle to cross the sea and live in Libya with the Cyrenaeans'), and a second time in 4.161, when discussing the new constitution of Cyrene, which was legislated by Demonax from Mantinea ('he divided the people into

three tribes; of which the Theraeans and dispossessed Libyans were one, the Peloponnesians and Cretans the second, and all the islanders the third').

This description presents the wide horizon of the Greek colonization movement and the cross-cultural interactions that were involved in these enterprises. Thus one can reconstruct contemporary maritime networks from the story and draw the spatial infrastructure of the colonization movement and the political and commercial relations throughout the Mediterranean that are concerned with the foundation of Cyrene.

The presentation of Libya itself starts with the Mediterranean shoreline and progresses inland. First, Herodotus introduces the various tribes inhabiting the shoreline strip from east to west, from Egypt toward the Pillars of Heracles (4.168–80, 191–4). The survey continues as follows: the Adyrmachidae, who dwell nearest to Egypt, the Giligamae, who inhabit the country to the west as far as the island of Aphrodisias (and in their territory lies the island of Platea), the Asbystae, the Auschisae, the Nasamones, the Psylli (who perished from the land), the Macae, the Gindanes, the Lotus-eaters, the Machlyes, the Auseans, the Maxyes, the Zauekes and the Gyzantes. All of these tribes are presented and described successively from east to west, except the last three, which are discussed in 4.191–4. Though not without occasional confusions, the exposition of the Libyans is arranged around the distinction between nomadic groups (from Egypt to lake Tritonis) and farming groups (from Tritonis to the west). This distinction is also the justification for presenting the three most western tribes in a separate section.[56]

In all probability, Herodotus modelled his account on the basis of that of Hecataeus. However, he seems to be summarizing the latter's information and simultaneously incorporating corrections into it by drawing on other sources.[57] Mario Liverani argues that Herodotus' description of the northern parts of Libya originates from Greek sources and is shaped in the form of a *periplous*, while his descriptions of the southern parts is shaped in the form of a caravan itinerary, which must depend on local sources of information based on trans-Saharan trading routes.[58] As Herodotus never personally visited the Libyan oases, he probably based his account on either Cyrenaean or Egyptian informants.[59]

As mentioned before, the *periplous* genre was no doubt the most common literary form of geographic and ethnographic description in the Greek world.[60] *Periplous*-like descriptions appear already in the Homeric epics and the *Homeric Hymns* and there is a wide consensus among scholars that the geographic treaties by Hecataeus of Miletus were written in the form of a *periplous*.[61] Herodotus' description of the Libyan shore thus follows a traditional geographic genre. Only when proceeding to the description of inland territories does he abandon the traditional maritime depiction and base his account on information from second- and third-hand sources. As we shall see shortly, the account of these inland territories presents a schematic and fantastic geography that is very different from the traditional *periplous* description.

Herodotus shows special interest in the more unfamiliar peculiarities of the Libyans, especially uncommon sexual practices.[62] He pays special attention to differences and similarities in customs between the various Libyan tribes, with an emphasis on cultural influences from the Egyptians and Greeks. The survey of the peoples inhabiting the Libyan coasts includes a short account of their customs and practices: some resemble those of the Egyptians or the Cyrenaeans, while others are unique. Among those, Herodotus mentions the skills of chariot riding, flock herding, date picking and honey collection, as well as religious rites. Apart from some unconventional marital practices, such as spouse sharing and polygamy, most of the customs mentioned were quite conventional and familiar in the Greek world. The overall impression of this description is

of a 'cultured' tribal society, and Herodotus emphasizes more than once the mutual cultural influences between the various peoples inhabiting the shores (Libyans, Egyptians, Greeks and Phoenicians).

Several examples can demonstrate the main characteristics of Herodotus' treatment of the shoreline tribes:

In 4.168, Herodotus describes the Adyrmachidae: 'The Adyrmachidae are the people that live nearest to Egypt; they follow Egyptian customs for the most part, but dress like other Libyans.' Herodotus states that aside from their Libyan apparel, other main attributes of the tribe resemble those of the Egyptians. This is not to say that he does not notice the oddities of the people: 'They are the only Libyans that do this, and who show the king all virgins that are to be married; the king then takes the virginity of whichever of these pleases him.' Here, as in other places (4.162, 176, 180), peculiar sexual customs attract Herodotus' attention. The distinct systems of social and family organization of the Libyans, who, like many other nomads, practised polygamy, are translated here into rather simplistic, and at times negative, terms,[63] although it is known that early variations of the medieval *ius primae noctis* were widespread in the ancient world, and had parallels in northern Africa as well.[64] Though Herodotus lingers on the subject of peculiar sexual habits and social customs, he also emphasizes resemblances to the Egyptians in culture and customs.

A similar picture rises from the description of the Giligamae (4.169), who inhabit the country to the west as far as the island of Aphrodisias. Herodotus states that 'This people is like the others in its customs' and mentions that this is the natural habitat of the Silphium plant. The Silphium, cited already by Solon (fr.33.1 Gentili-Prato), was thought to have medicinal properties and was gathered by the native communities and sold to the king of Cyrene, who probably held a monopoly on it. Various evidence, such as the Cup of Arcesilaus (which probably shows Arcesilaus II supervising the weighing and storage of the roots), and the depiction of the plant on Cyrenaean coins, demonstrates the fundamental role of the Silphium in Cyrene's economy.[65] The process of growing, harvesting, collecting, storing and selling the Silphium plant is an excellent example of the multicultural economic ties between different ethnic groups living on the shores of Libya, and it offers another example of the multicultural networks of the ancient Mediterranean discussed in the scholarship section above.

Another example of the multicultural network rises from the description in 4.170 of the Abystae, who: 'drive four-horse chariots to a greater extent than any other Libyans', and 'it is their practice to imitate most of the Cyrenaean customs'. Herodotus portrays the Abystae, who live inland of Cyrene, as deeply influenced by Cyrenaean customs.

An interesting example is the description of the Nasamones in 4.172, 'who in summer leave their flocks by the sea and go up to the land called Augila to gather dates from the palm-trees that grow there in great abundance and all bear fruit'. Here Herodotus emphasizes the unique custom of the tribe, which moves between the coast and the highland in an annual cycle. The distance between the shore and Augila (modern Awgila) is about 238 kilometres.[66] In spite of the distances between the Mediterranean shore and the desert oasis, Herodotus links them by a route seasonally taken by the Nasamones in their dimorphic activity: animal herds on the coast, date collection in the oasis.[67] The gravitation of Augila/Awgila towards the coast of Cyrenaica is still attested to in medieval times.[68] As in other cases, Herodotus mentions the polygamy practised in the tribe, and some peculiar habits – such as swearing on ancestors' graves or using them for divination – practices that are still common in these regions of North Africa.[69]

Especially interesting is the description of the Machlyes and Auseans, who dwell on the shores of the Tritonian Lake (4.180):

> They celebrate a yearly festival of Athena, where their maidens are separated into two bands and fight each other with stones and sticks, thus (they say) honouring in the way of their ancestors that native goddess whom we call Athena. Maidens who die of their wounds are called false virgins. Before the girls are set fighting, the whole people choose the fairest maid, and arm her with a Corinthian helmet and Greek panoply, to be then mounted on a chariot and drawn all along the lake shore. With what armour they equipped their maidens before Greeks came to live near them, I cannot say; but I suppose the armour was Egyptian; for I maintain that the Greeks took their shield and helmet from Egypt.

The description is a fascinating testimony to the multidirectional influences on the southern Mediterranean shore. Two local tribes practice a yearly ritual permeated with Greek influences, which are, in turn, based on cultural appropriation from the Egyptians. The description also demonstrates the Greek tendency to interpret and understand the mythology and religion of other cultures by means of their own mythology and religious practices, a tendency known as *interpretatio Graeca*, which also indicates that trans-religious influences were widespread in the ancient Mediterranean.

The overall picture is one that presents the Mediterranean coastline as a dynamic and fruitful ground for interaction between ethnic groups. Although it seems that Herodotus is interested mainly in pointing out the peculiarities and oddities of the Libyan tribes, he describes, in fact, a region characterized by a network of cultural appropriations and social influences.

Not only the habits of the people, but also the topography of the land are presented as familiar and benevolent geography: the Mediterranean shores are fertile (especially near Cyrene) and feature hills, woods, rivers and lakes. Descriptions and phrases such as: ‘palm-trees that grow there in great abundance and all bear fruit’; ‘This hill is thickly wooded’; ‘where much honey is made by bees’; and ‘It is full of olives and vines’,[70] create an overall impression of a bountiful, hospitable land with a temperate climate.

A completely different image emerges from the description of the inner parts of Libya. After presenting the shoreline in detail, Herodotus moves on to the south and describes an isolated strip of land, almost devoid of human habitation, which he calls the wild beasts’ land (4.181). The only information he gives about this region, except for the fact that it is infested with wild beasts, is a short line describing the Garamantes (4.174): ‘Inland of these to the south, the Garamantes live in wild beast country. They shun the sight and fellowship of men, and have no weapons of war, nor know how to defend themselves.’[71] This part of Libya is thus characterized as a dangerous, isolated, wild and rather empty strip of land that separates the coastline from the inner parts of the continent.

The contrast between culture and wilderness is a well-established literary motif that has many references in both ancient and modern literature. Usually, the opposition between culture and savagery is manifested through the opposition between the city and the open countryside, the urban and the rural, and more than once it carries a sexual characterization: the wilderness is an exterritorial space in which young girls are abandoned to the unrestrained desires of men (Pan the god of wild nature, who exercises unrestrained sexual powers; or Zeus, who abducted Europa as she played on the beach, and Io when she was venturing by herself in the meadows).[72]

Herodotus' description of the wild beasts' land does not have a sexual context, but it does echo the traditional opposition of culture vs. savagery, city vs. wilderness. By presenting the Garamantes' land as an empty, wild and isolated territory, Herodotus draws an unmistakable line between the Mediterranean zone of Libya and the cut-off inland territories of the continent, thus creating the impression that apart from the Mediterranean shoreline, all parts of the Libyan continent are wild, uncivilized and dangerous.

Beyond the wild beasts' land to the south, Herodotus continues (4.181): 'runs a ridge of sand that stretches from Thebes of Egypt to the Pillars of Heracles. At intervals of about ten days' journey along this ridge there are masses of great lumps of salt in hills; on the top of every hill, a fountain of cold sweet water shoots up from the midst of the salt.' This region, unlike the Mediterranean strip, presents an unusual topography based on a schematic and symmetrical pattern: a ridge of sand stretching from the extreme east to the extreme west and exhibiting a pattern of salt-hills and springs in fixed distances from each other.[73] A different tribe inhabits every salt-hill; the people live in houses made of blocks of salt and the region, as a whole, is characterized by a wondrous geography.

One hill is the source of the spring of the sun (ἡ κρήνη καλέεται ἡλίου), a magical fountain that cools down as the day progresses: coldest at noon, warming up as the day draws to a close and reaching its boiling point at midnight (4.181).[74] The spring of the sun was well known in Antiquity and appeared in numerous sources.[75] Gsell and Asheri identify it with the still-spouting 'Ain el-Hamam spring; its constant temperature of 29°C contrasts with the varying outside temperature, creating the magical impression described by Herodotus.[76] The magical fountain is yet another example of the purportedly wondrous nature of the regions located far from the Mediterranean shores.

Around another salt-hill live people who sow the earth that they have laid over the salt, and their oxen walk backwards as they graze (4.183). The cave-dwelling Ethiopians (οἱ τρωγλοδύται Αἰθίοπες) live near them: they are the swiftest of all people; they feed on snakes and lizards and their speech sounds like the squeaking of bats. The Ethiopians are mythical people who inhabit the most southern regions of the Earth. The Greek meaning of the name is 'burnt-face' and they appear in many early Greek sources starting with Homer.[77] In the Greek world, 'Ethiopia' was a generic name denoting the lands of the far south, just as 'Scythia' was used to denote the northern parts of the world.[78]

At a distance of another ten-day journey live the Atarantes, people who have no name and curse the sun for burning and destroying their bodies and their land (4.184). Within this strip of salt-hills stands also Mount Atlas, which has the shape of a perfect, slender circle, and is said to be so high that its summit cannot be seen. The people of the country, who eat no living creature and see no dreams in their sleep, say the mountain is the pillar of heaven.[79]

By now it is obvious to the reader that Libya is divided into horizontal bands and, as one progresses from the shore inland, the natural landscape and its habitants become increasingly wild, fantastic and bizarre. In this region, not only are the topography and customs of the people unusual and strange, but the climate is also extreme – no rain ever falls there.

The ridge of salt-hills stretches westwards until it reaches the ocean on the western boundary of the Earth. Herodotus does not know the names of all the tribes, salt-hills and springs on the ridge, but he assures his reader that the ridge continues as far as the Pillars of Heracles and that it maintains the same pattern: at the end of every ten-day

journey is a salt mine and men dwell near it (4.185). The calculated length of the ridge, as described by Herodotus, adds up to 900 kilometres, corresponding to the distance covered in about a month-long journey.[80] Although there is some evidence to assume that Herodotus fashioned his description of the salt ridge on an actual trans-Saharan route, the overall picture presents a rather extraordinary geography; it is described as a fantastic region, and most of the information provided is unrealistic and schematic.

Extraordinary geography was a well-established concept in the Greek literary tradition, and often there were no clear lines distinguishing realistic geographic descriptions from fantastic ones. The first appearance of such descriptions is in books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*, which presents a mixture of concrete and realistic geography, such as the offshore island near the Cyclops's land, and extraordinary geography that includes floating islands and the land of the dead. Another example is the seventh-century epic poem *Arimaspea*, written by Aristeas from Proconnesus, which presented an account of his travels in the far north, including descriptions of fantastic lands and peoples: the one-eyed Arimaspi, gold-guarding griffins and the Hyperboreans, among whom Apollo lives during the winter months.[81] In various places within the *Histories*, Herodotus likewise weaves descriptions of extraordinary geography, which he deems typical of the remote regions of the Earth, such as India, North Scythia and here in the salt ridges of Libya.

The southernmost rim of the salt ridge is, in fact, the outer limit of the inhabited world, the *oikoumene.* The Greek term οἰκουμένη sometimes referred to the whole Earth (γῆ), but originally designated the inhabited part of the Earth, in contrast to the uninhabited portion, and thus became a key concept in the Greek perception of space.[82] Though *oikoumene* is a geographical term, it has an unmistakable anthropocentric meaning that expresses the social aspect of spaces associated with humankind.

According to one *testimonium*, Xenophanes was the first known author to employ the term *oikoumene*, and he linked the word to the collective subject 'we' (i.e., human beings), thus relating *oikoumene* to humankind.[83] Though many sources often used *oikoumene* to denote the Earth, its original meaning refers to human dwelling places.[84] Herodotus uses the word οἰκουμένη (inhabited world/land), or οἰκέουσι (inhabitants), many times throughout his *Histories*, always referring to ordered social communities who live in permanent settlements and depend on agricultural practices.[85] Nomadic tribes, who migrate with their herds and live by hunting and gathering, Herodotus describes as νέμονται, a word having a wide range of meanings, including 'to-be settlers', but also 'exploit' or 'use'.[86] Thus, the term *oikoumene* refers to settled and orderly space, which supports agricultural societies that maintain social institutions. These social institutions can, of course, be very different from those practised by the Greeks, as from those of the Libyans living in the salt hills. Nevertheless, as long as there are human inhabitants on the land, it is still regarded as a part of the *oikoumene*. Beyond, there is only vast desolation.

Herodotus concludes the description of Libya with these words (4.185): 'Beyond this ridge, the southern and inland parts of Libya are desolate and waterless: there are no wild beasts, no rain, no forests; this region is wholly without moisture.' This is the final strip of Libya, situated at the extreme south and converging with the edges of the Earth (*peirata gaies*): a vast wasteland, occupied by neither men nor beasts, a paradigmatic ex-territory for all human beings. In the next chapter, Herodotus returns to the Libyan shores of the Mediterranean and to the various peoples inhabiting them.

From the time of Homer and Hesiod, the Earth was perceived as a round disk surrounded by the River Ocean (*Okeanos*), which was a mythical and geographical

manifestation of the *peirata gaies*.[87] Although this was no doubt the traditional world structure, Herodotus scorns previous and contemporary geographers, who place the River Ocean at the Earth's boundaries (4.36), and when describing the far extremities of Libya in 4.185, he does not mention it. He does, nevertheless, depict the far reaches of Libya in the traditional framework as a *peirata gaies* – a desolate wasteland at the far ends of the Earth. Whether he imagined a great body of water beyond these edges remains an open question.

To summarize, Herodotus' description of Libya displays a geographical picture consisting of four horizontal strips, or bands. The first strip is the coastline; it is home to many tribes and peoples who, on the whole, belong to a developed society. Libyans, Egyptians, Greeks and Phoenicians populate this region, and Herodotus emphasizes the commercial and cultural connections and influences between the different populations inhabiting the shores. The Libyans living on the coast are, therefore, part of the dynamic multicultural network of the Mediterranean basin.

The second strip is the wild beasts' land, separating the shoreline from the inner part of the Libyan continent. This region is characterized as secluded, wild and dangerous. The third band is the sand ridge with its salt-hills, set apart at similar intervals, that crosses Libya from Egypt in the east to the Pillars of Heracles in the west. The ridge is typified by wondrous geography, bizarre social practices and extreme climate, and it follows a symmetrical pattern. The southern border of the ridge is in fact the far end of the inhabited world, the limits of the *oikoumene*; beyond it no human society dwells.

The fourth, southernmost band is a great, desolate desert – a region with no water, flora, fauna or humans. Herodotus describes this zone as an empty space suffering from an extreme and harsh climate. The description is no doubt an illustration of the 'edges of the Earth', a realm radically alien to all that is human, organized and orderly. Traditionally, beyond the desert lies the River Ocean, but Herodotus does not explicitly mention the mythical embodiment of the primordial waters.

Conclusions: the Maritime Mediation Model

A graphic presentation of Herodotus' description of Libya, which demonstrates the fundamental principles of his latent spatial perception, is presented below (Figure 1).[88] At the far end of the scheme are the boundaries and edges of the Earth. Further inland is a vacant and uninhabited region that ends at the ridge of salt hills, marking the limit of the *oikoumene*. These farthermost regions of the *oikoumene* are characterized by an extreme climate, an exceptional, yet surprisingly symmetrical, topography, and by the unusual practices of its inhabitants. Herodotus' description of the sandy ridge is based on poor and insufficient sources of information, combined with geometric and geographic principles (such as symmetry), rumours and stories. Even further inland lies the wild beasts' land, a buffer zone separating the familiar, populated and friendly shore of the Mediterranean Sea from the hostile hinterland. Herodotus does not describe this strip of land in detail, but he mentions that it functions as a natural boundary between familiar and unfamiliar spaces.

Herodotus dedicates most of his *Libyan logos* to the regions stretching along the shores. He lingers over the description of the various tribes, their attributes, customs, beliefs and rituals and emphasizes the multicultural connections and influences between the different groups living on the shore. The heart of human space, according to the *Libyan logos*, was set along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea; this is where people's lives interacted intensely with each other. The farther it is from the sea, the more

Figure 1 Libya according to Herodotus

isolated, wild and dangerous nature becomes. The centre of human activity, as well as the geographical centre of the Earth, is located on the Mediterranean shoreline.

Herodotus' focus on the Mediterranean Sea is not uncommon, but rather reflects a fundamental spatial principle in Archaic and Classical thought. As mentioned before, Homer and Hesiod were the first to present the basic structure of the Earth, which was perceived as a round, flat disk, surrounded by the flow of the River Ocean, which functioned as *peirata gaies*.[89] Further inland, a second circle existed, which manifested the concept of the inhabited world – the *oikoumene*. In the middle of the scheme, mediating between the (two or three) continents of the Earth, lay the maritime stretch of the Mediterranean Sea, which was the historical space occupied by the Greeks.

It is important to stress that, at the beginning of the Archaic age, Greeks principally inhabited the shores of the Aegean Sea, between the Ionic Sea and the shores of Asia Minor. This narrow, easily navigable stretch of sea can be regarded as a 'small sea'. Within the continuing process of exploration and colonization, nearly a thousand Greek cities and trading-posts were founded along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, thus turning the Mediterranean basin into a 'big sea' – a dynamic network of Greek (and non-Greek) cities by the time of Herodotus. 'A single sea, stretching from the river Phasis to the Pillars of Heracles', as Plato phrased it (*Phaedo*, 109. a–b).[90]

The sea and the maritime culture accompanying it, were the most fundamental elements in Greek space perception, and lay at the centre of the Greek spatial experience. The basic Greek spatial model can therefore be seen as three concentric circles, the innermost being the maritime space that stands in the centre, the second being the lands inhabitant by the nations of the world (*oikoumene*), and the third being the edges of the Earth (see Figure 2). Herodotus' description of Libya in book 4 is consistent with this model, which focuses on the centrality of the sea, rather than on the number of continents and their boundaries. In other words, the spatial model revealed in the *Libyan logos* represent a coherent spatial perception, in which the Mediterranean shoreline functions as the heart of human activity and a series of land strips manifest a sequential decline in the quality of the natural environment, climate and peoples, until they reach the ultimate boundary at the far reaches of the Earth. This spatial model fits the Greek

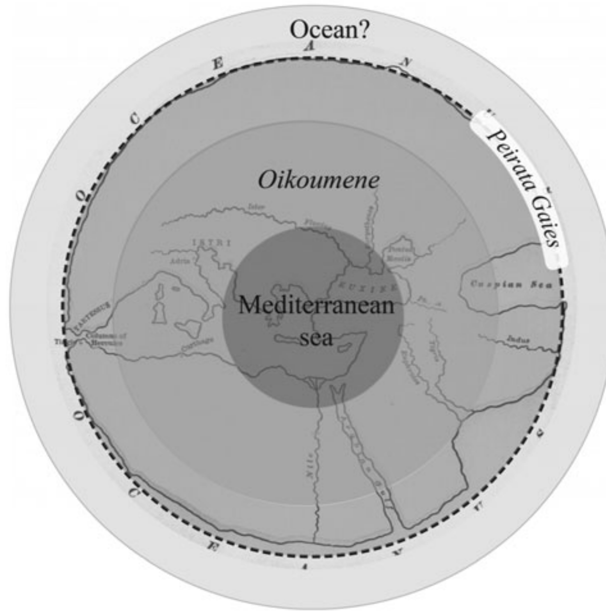

Figure 2 The Maritime Mediation Model

historic circumstances of maritime expansion, settlement, and cross-cultural interactions much better than the continental theory usually ascribed to Herodotus, which focuses on continental oppositions, the dichotomies between Greeks and barbarians and criticism of the Persian imperial ambition. It was not polarity that governed Herodotus' image of the Earth, but rather a concentric, maritime vision.

All this is not to say that Herodotus did not present the geographical debates of his time. On the contrary: Herodotus' *Histories* are an illuminating source for understanding contemporary geographical, ethnographical and political debates and disputes. One can learn from the *Histories* that fierce discussions took place over issues such as the number of continents, the natural boundaries separating them, the course of rivers and the size and location of various bodies of water. James Romm argues that Herodotus reflects the two competing spatial models of his time: one consisting of the division of the Earth into two continents (Europe in the north and Asia in the south), and the other of the division into three continents (a vertical division: Europe, Asia and Libya).[91] Yet it is important to note that debates, fierce and passionate as they might be, are not necessarily an indication of two competing spatial models. The geographical debates discussed by Herodotus were not an expression of two competing spatial models, but rather represent a professional debate that took place within one overlapping spatial paradigm based on Mediterranean multidirectional networks.

Herodotus, like many learned Greeks both before and after him, seems to have supported a spatial model that placed the maritime space of the Mediterranean at the centre of the Earth, and regarded it as the world's focal point. A Mediterranean spatial model is valid, whether the Earth is composed of two continents or of three, and whether the boundary separating Europe from Asia is the River Phasis or the Tanais. In other words, the overall spatial model held by Herodotus and his contemporaries was a model governed by a maritime perspective that focused on the Mediterranean Sea and

on the multicultural networks of its shores. Within this model many geographic and ethnographic debates took place.

Two fundamental principles govern the Maritime Mediation Model: (1) the central position of the sea within the model, and (2) the perception of the sea as a mediating space (from the Latin: *mediatus*, *mediare*). Within this model, the Mediterranean Sea lies at the geometric centre of the Earth, and thus mediates between those who live on its shores, Greeks and non-Greeks alike. The mediation space is by definition a maritime one, a realm stretching between the shores and perceived from a maritime perspective.

The Maritime Mediation Model does not imply an unrealistically optimistic view of the ancient Mediterranean. It consists of continued multidirectional social, economic and cultural networks, and offers flexible structures for self-perceived identities, rather than dichotomous models of oppositional identity. The ongoing connections between Greeks and non-Greeks throughout the Mediterranean were not only ties of commerce and mutual cultural influences, but also included rivalries, wars, prejudice and a wide variety of changing political interests. The Maritime Mediation Model allows us to look upon Greek history from a maritime perspective and to understand Greek attitudes toward the inland regions (regarding, for example, the structure of the Earth, the number of continents, the nature of various peoples and the nature of the Persian empire) through this unique prism.

The Maritime Mediation Model is visible throughout Herodotus' writings, whether in his geographical and ethnographical descriptions or in the historical and political discussions. Furthermore, the Maritime Mediation Model is evident in many other Archaic and Classical sources, such as mythological, geographical, historical and ethnographical writings, urban planning, medical writings and religious practices, all of which require a separate analysis and presentation.[92]

The short *Libyan logos* is only a small window that allows a glimpse of the Maritime Mediation Model, but it can be demonstrated through other parts of the *Histories*, such as the *Scythian logos* or various foundation stories presented throughout the book. Reading Herodotus through a Mediterranean speculum may help us to understand the unique ways in which the Greeks perceived and experienced the space surrounding them and the complex relationships between Greeks and non-Greeks. Herodotus lived in a maritime world that stretched along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, where inhabitants of cities along the extensive littoral stretches maintained a complicated network of cross-cultural interactions. Understanding Herodotus' geographical discussions as an expression of a debate concerning the number of continents, or understanding his ethnographic discourse as manifesting Greek attitudes toward non-Greeks, is too simplistic in the light of the dynamism of the Mediterranean world. After refining the geographical arguments and looking beyond the rhetorical argumentations in Herodotus, one finds a flexible and dynamic spatial model that places its heart and centre in the maritime space of the Mediterranean, offers multicultural and multidirectional connections between its shoreline populations, and looks upon space from the sea outward to the land.

Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. Romm, "Herodotus and Mythic Geography"; Lloyd, "Herodotus on Egyptians and Libyans", 236–42; Rood, "Herodotus and Foreign Lands", 292. Shaw, "Eaters of Flesh".
2. For a comprehensive discussion on the concept of spatial models and spatial perceptions, and an account of the novel attitudes towards space and the spatial turn, see Arias, "Rethinking Space".
3. Ibid., 30–5.
4. Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn*.
5. Cosgrove, *Mappings*, 7.
6. Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic", 207–25; Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 10–12.
7. Bulmer, *Chicago School of Sociology.*
8. Braudel, *La Méditerranée.*
9. Benko and Strohmayer, *Space and Social Theory.*
10. Blomqvist, *The Date of Hanno's Periplus*; Peretti, *Il periplo di Scilace*; Harley and Woodward, *Cartography*; Heidel, "Anaximander's Book"; Heidel, *Frame of Greek Maps*; Clarke, *Between Geography and History*; Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography*; Mitchell, *Historical Geography*; Cary, *Geographic Background*.
11. Dueck, *Geography in Classical Antiquity.*
12. Ibid., 22.
13. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth.* See also on Herodotus' mythic geography: Romm, "Herodotus and Mythic Geography".
14. Romm, "Continents, Climates and Cultures".
15. Strauss-Clay, *Homer's Trojan Theater.*
16. Strauss-Clay, *Politics of Olympus*.
17. Purves, *Space and Time*.
18. Ibid., esp. pp. 118–58 (pp. 144–50 are especially pertinent in the distinction made between hodological and cartographic space).
19. Clarke, *Between Geography and History*; Grethlein, "Memory and Material Objects"; Hutton, *Describing Greece*; Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*; Tsagalis, *From Listeners to Viewers*.
20. Horden and Purcell, *Corrupting Sea*.
21. Malkin, *A Small Greek World.* See also Malkin, "Networks and Greek Identity"; Malkin, Constantakopoulou and Panagopoulou, *Greek and Roman Networks*.
22. Abulafia, *Great Sea.*
23. Constantakopoulou, *Dance of the Islands.*
24. Demetriou, *Negotiating Identity.*
25. Broodbank, *Making of the Middle Sea.*
26. Tartaron, *Maritime Networks.*
27. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus.*
28. Harrison, "Place of Geography".
29. Rood, "Herodotus and Foreign Lands". See also Rood, "Herodotus".
30. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context*. See also Thomas, "Intellectual Milieu".
31. Barker et al., "Mapping an Ancient Historian".
32. Levinas and Hand, *Levinas Reader.*
33. Munson, *Telling Wonders*; Browning, "Greeks and Others"; Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 51–77; Georges, *Barbarian Asia*; Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*; Lissarrague, "Vases grecs".
34. Konstan, "To Hellenikon Ethnos".
35. Hall, *Ethnic Identity.*
36. Pelling, "East is East".
37. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other.*

38. Malkin, *Returns of Odysseus*, 178–209.
39. Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians*.
40. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 57.
41. On Hecataeus, see Fowler, "Herodotus and His Predecessors". For the fragments of Hecataeus, see *FGrHist* 1 F 37–357.
42. On Anaximander's map, see Heidel, *Frame of Greek Maps*; Farinelli, "Did Anaximander Ever Say (or Write)?"; Couprie, Hahn and Naddaf, *Anaximander in Context*.
43. See Frances Pownall's edition of and commentary on the *testimonia* and fragments of Hecataeus in *Brill's New Jacoby* (online).
44. See for example: Dueck, *Geography in Classical Antiquity*, 36.
45. For the *Periplous*, see Blomqvist, *Date of Hanno's Periplus*; Peretti, *Il periplo di Scilace*; Janni, *La Mappa e il Periplo*; Prontera, "Periploi"; Purves, *Space and Time*, 65–95.
46. Burian, "Periplous".
47. *FGrHist* 1 T 15.
48. Klaus, *Hecataeus of Miletus*.
49. See n. 30.
50. English translation of this and the quotations that follow is by A.D. Godley.
51. Romm, "Continents, Climates and Cultures".
52. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, 168. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context*, 78.
53. Romm, "Continents, Climates and Cultures", 219. See also Romm, *Herodotus and Mythic Geography*, 97–113; Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, 342–5.
54. The idea of colonization has been well discussed in Malkin, *Returns of Odysseus*.
55. For a discussion on the Greek concept of the edges of the Earth, see Romm, *The Edges of the Earth*.
56. Asheri, et al., *Commentary on Herodotus,* 695.
57. Ibid., 696.
58. Liverani, "Libyan Caravan Road".
59. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II*, 72–6.
60. For the Greek *periplous* and the hodological perception of space, see n. 42.
61. See, for example, Hom. *Il.* 14.225–30; Hom. *Od*. 3.168–77; *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3.390–439. For a discussion of the maritime routes in Hom. *Od*. 3.168, see Malkin and Fichman, "Homer, Odyssey III".
62. Lloyd, "Herodotus on Egyptians and Libyans", 236–42; Rood, "Herodotus and Foreign Lands", 292.
63. Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus*, 696.
64. Gsell, *Hérodote*, 196–7.
65. For full references, see Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus*, 696.
66. See map no. 38 C4 in Barrington Atlas.
67. Liverani, "Libyan Caravan Road", 500.
68. Ibid., 500, n. 22.
69. Gsell, *Hérodote*, 183–5.
70. Hdt. 4.172, 175, 194, 195.
71. On the etymology of the Garamantes, see Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus*, 699.
72. Gottesman, 'Unpardoned Gaze', 28–9.
73. On the possibility of an actual route between the Sahara's oases, characterized by ten-day intervals, see Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus,* 705; Liverani, "Libyan Caravan Road".
74. Magical fountains are a popular mythical theme; see, for example Aesch. *PV.* 807–9; Ov. *Met.* 15.309–10.
75. Cf. among others Diod. 17.50; Curtius Rufus 4.7.22; Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.2; Plin. *HN.* 228.
76. Gsell, *Hérodote*, 105–7. Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus*, 705.
77. Hom. *Il.* 1.423; *Od.* 1.22–4. On the mythical geography of the Ethiopians, see Nakassis, "Gemination at the Horizons". On the Ethiopians in Herodotus, see Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus,* 706–7.
78. Strabo 1.2.27 provides an excellent illustration for this: 'I assert that the ancient Greeks, in the same way as they classed all the northern nations with which they were familiar under the one name of Scythians, or, according to Homer, Nomades, and afterwards becoming acquainted with those towards the west, styled them Kelts and Iberians; sometimes com-

pounding the names into Keltiberians, or Keltoscythians, thus ignorantly uniting various distinct nations; so I affirm they designated as Ethiopia the whole of the southern countries towards the ocean.'

79. On the religious and spatial concept of the pillar of heaven as an *axis mundi*, see West, *East Face of Helicon,* 149; Butterworth, *Tree at the Navel*; Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, 41–6.
80. Asheri et al., *Commentary on Herodotus*, 705.
81. On Aristeas, see Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconnesus*.
82. Schmitt, "Oikoumene".
83. Xen. fr. 41, DK. See Schmitt, "Oikoumene".
84. See, for example, Plutarch, *Alexander*, 18.1; Polybius 1.1.
85. Hdt. 1.8–27, 1.170, 2.32, 3.106, 4.110, 5.75, 8.11.
86. See LSJ. s.v. νέμω, II.2, III.
87. Hom. *Il*. 14.200ff.; cf. Hom. *Il*. 18.607ff.; Hom. *Od*. 10.508ff., 11.13ff., 11.639ff; Hes. *Sc*. 314ff. For a discussion on the geographic and mythical Oceanus, see West, "Three Presocratic Cosmologies"; West, *East Face of Helicon*, 144–8; Moreux, "La nuit, l'ombre"; Nagy, "Phaethon, Sappho's Phaon"; Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon*, 92–8; Romm, *Edges of the Earth*, 16–22.
88. See Shaw, "Eaters of Flesh", for a similar diagram of horizontal bands in Herodotus' description of Scythia.
89. Hom. *Il*. 18.607–8; Hes. *Shield*. 314–15.
90. On Mediterranean networks and connectivity, see nn. 18–24.
91. Romm, "Continents, Climates and Cultures".
92. For a mythological case study, see Gottesman, "Wanderings of Io".

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