

Reading 1 Herodotus 7.228: Epitaphs

(Source: de Sélincourt, A. (trans.) revised by J. Marincola (2003) Herodotus: *The Histories*, 7.228, London: Penguin, p.495)

The dead were buried where they fell, and with them the men who had been killed before those dismissed by Leonidas left the pass. Over them is this inscription, in honour of the whole force:

Four thousand here from Pelops' land
Against three million once did stand.

The Spartans have a special epitaph; it runs:

Go tell the Spartans, you who read:
We took their orders, and here lie dead.

For the seer Megistias there is the following:

Here lies Megistias, who died
When the Mede passed Spercheius' tide.
A prophet; yet he scorned to save
Himself, but shared the Spartans' grave.

The columns with the epitaphs inscribed on them were erected in honour of the dead by the Amphictyons – though the epitaph upon the seer Megistias was the work of Simonides, the son of Leoprepes, who put it there for friendship's sake.

Reading 2 Herodotus 7.238: Xerxes and the Spartan king

(Source: de Sélincourt, A. (trans.) revised by J. Marincola (2003) Herodotus: *The Histories*, 7.238, London: Penguin, p.499)

After this conversation Xerxes went over the battlefield to see the bodies, and having been told that Leonidas was king of Sparta and commander of the Spartan force, ordered his head to be cut off and fixed on a stake. This is in my opinion the strongest evidence – though there is plenty more – that King Xerxes, while Leonidas was still alive, felt fiercer anger against him than against any other man; had that not been so, he would never have committed this outrage upon his body; for normally the Persians, more than any other nation I know of, honour men who distinguish themselves in war. However, Xerxes' order was carried out.