Memorials of Glorious Defeat: Ancient Monuments for the Battle of Thermopylae

1. From almost the moment that the dust settled on the central Greek pass of Thermopylae in the summer of 480 BC, 2500 years ago, the heroic ‘last stand’ of King Leonidas of Sparta, his 300 Spartiate warriors and their local allies has been narrated in myriad oral and then written formats, recalled in both texts and monuments for a wide range of ancient, medieval and now modern audiences. Inscribed epitaphs and a lion statue were erected at the battlefield some years later, and a hero cult for Leonidas was set up at Sparta. It was the success of written reactions to the battle, notably the contemporary poetry of Simonides and the historical prose two generations later of Herodotus, which enshrined the battle in the collective memory of the Greeks and then the Romans as well, passing through the middle ages up to the present day expansion of receptions such as the 2006 movie 300 shown here (inspired by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley’s 1998 comic book, which was in turn inspired by the 1962 movie The 300 Spartans).¹ This presentation explores some ancient memorials of Thermopylae, when it was only a few years or decades past, in the context of modern Australia. I hope to thus bring up some of the lesser-known material and ritual aspects of ancient Greek commemoration of battles by the losing side, and compare these with the modern Australian memorials of loss, specifically at Gallipoli.

2. In modern Australia, as in the UK, Europe, or the USA in various other forms, there are a wide range of ways of remembering wars, battles, and the soldiers who fight them, whether victories, defeats, or something in between. Certainly as a widely memorialized defeat, Gallipoli has been widely compared with Thermopylae over the last century, and has inspired some similar memorials. However, there are differences. Journalists took photos at Gallipoli, as shown here, and filed stories with the international media. Historians then drew on these accounts, interviews, and the landscape itself to write up histories from the large to the individual. The battlefield itself is today lined with cemeteries, epitaphs and monuments, and draws pilgrims. Back in Australia, lists of the dead were set up long ago in permanent form, and are curated and taken care of, such as this one in the entryway of University of Queensland’s main Forgan Smith building. The battle, and hence defeat, is recalled through annual collective rituals like the Brisbane

¹ Miller cited Herodotus, Golding 1965 and Bradford 1980 among his sources; see also Milton 1962; Cartledge 2006. An earlier version of this presentation was published as Brown 2013.
ANZAC Day parade (whose Greek marchers include veterans of the Greek army and the Australian army's more recent defeat in Vietnam). Sarah Midford reflects on these recent, and shifting, national (and nation-building) memorializations of Gallipoli and the growing Australian pilgrimage to Gallipoli as part of a larger Australian academic project for the centenary of Gallipoli.²

3. All of these contemporary texts, monuments and rituals, on both the battlefield and at home, have precedents in ancient Greece, in the commemoration of the Persian War of 480-479 BC, between 31 or so allied Greek city-states and the army of the Persian King Xerxes. Our main extant narrative of the war is Herodotus’s *Histories*, but our knowledge of the concrete ancient legacy of that Persian War does not rest only on Herodotus’ famous narrative account. We can compare his written histories with other texts, landscapes and monuments for a fuller picture of how this Persian War, and notably Thermopylae’s defeat, was once remembered.

The battle of Thermopylae itself left dead bodies, weapons and baggage strewn across the coastal pass of the Hot Gates in central Greece. This is a display of arrowheads and spearpoints from Athens’ National Archaeological Museum. These physical remains were quickly used on both sides in crafting stories about what had just happened, and what it meant. Herodotus says King Xerxes’ first move after the battle was that since ‘about 20,000’ (ἦσαν δὲ καὶ δύο μυριάδες) Persians lay dead, Xerxes buried all but 1000 in mass graves, and left the Greek dead exposed, ‘all 4000 piled in a heap together in a single spot’ (οἱ δὲ πάντες ἐκέατο ἄλεις συγκεκομισμένοι ἐς τώμῳ χωρίον τέσσερες χιλιάδες).³

Xerxes then organized a sight-seeing day at Thermopylae for the Persian fleet, who were brought over from northern Euboea (with many local tourists) to walk among the remaining corpses. Herodotus says they failed to recognize the helots among the Greek dead, who they believed to be ‘all Lacedaemonians and Thespians,’ but found Xerxes’ claim of only 1000 dead on the Persian side ‘laughable’ because of the way the bodies of the Greeks were all heaped up in one place, while the Persian bodies were spread around. Herodotus thus presents Xerxes’ publicity stunt as successful in giving his men the impression that 4000 Spartans and Thespians had been killed (although this number actually included helots), but unsuccessful in hiding the number of actual Persian (and allied) dead (which was clearly much higher than presented).

Most first-hand accounts of this battle died with their tellers, but a few endured to reach Herodotus, or other writers. Personal tales of the battle were certainly

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² Midford 2017, 10-12, 114; Reid, McGibbon and Midford 2017, 219-220.
³ See Herodotus 8.24-25 for his account of Xerxes’ immediate use of the dead at Thermopylae to create a story. Translations of Herodotus here and below based on Waterfield 1998.
communicated immediately, both by the Persians, and by Greeks on both sides. Within days, the Greek navy had retreated from Cape Artemisium, despite some success, and the Persian navy had taken northern Euboea and toured the battlefield at Thermopylae. Within weeks, the Persian army overran Phocis, Boeotia and Attica, were repulsed from Delphi, and sacked the Athenian Acropolis; then the Persian navy was lured into the straits at Salamis, defeated, and driven away. Xerxes retreated, the Hellenic alliance at the Corinthian Isthmus continued under the Spartan leadership of regent Pausanias through the winter of 480/479 BC, and the battle at Plataea then forced a final Persian retreat in 479 BC.

4. Battle trophies and epitaphs probably began to be set up at that point. Most are today fragmentary or only in texts, if they survive at all, like the serpent column trophy for the victory at Plataea, from Delphi to Constantinople/Istanbul, where it stands in the old hippodrome with only one serpent's head preserved in the museum, or the sole epitaph to survive, for the Corinthians at Salamis now in Athens' Epigraphic Museum. The epitaph of the Corinthians at Salamis reads: Oh stranger, once we lived in the well-watered city of Corinth, but now Salamis, the island of Ajax, holds us; here we destroyed Phoenician ships and Persians and Medes and saved holy Greece. Within a year of Thermopylae, then, Greeks on both sides had begun to deal with the costs, achievements and memory of the war, including the role of Leonidas' last stand.

5. However, how were the Greeks to mark such a great defeat, even one which led indirectly to final victory at Salamis and Plataea? Commemoration of Thermopylae fell broadly into three areas. First were the contemporary accounts, poems, epitaphs and monuments, at the battlefield and back in Sparta, in the 40 years or so before Herodotus wrote his History. Then Herodotus' monumental work of prose literature created the first known written narrative of the battle, based on evidence and opinion, to be read, shared, debunked, recopied, translated and published for centuries.

Finally there was a much longer ancient legacy: texts, monuments and rituals post-Herodotus, from the 4th century BC orators to Plutarch, Diodorus to the Palatine Anthology. In this presentation I try to discern a few different eras of these memorials today, and recover an ancient world with monuments and rituals alongside our surviving texts.

At the site of Thermopylae today, the landscape and the visible monuments are dramatically modern, and Herodotus is an essential guide to the ancient landscape. Silt brought down by

4 See Herodotus 8.1-125, but also Diodorus 11.12-19.
the Spercheius river has moved the coastline between the western and eastern ‘gates’ outwards into the Malian Gulf, especially since the early 19th century when the plain was devoted to rice cultivation. Statues of the mid-20th century honouring Leonidas and the Thespians are separated by a busy modern road from the low 15 meter kolonos hill at the middle ‘gate’ of the pass, which has been fitted out with stone steps and a paved top. However, Mounts Oeta and Kallidromon still loom to the south, steaming hot thermal springs still gush out just west of the hill, and the hill itself has been persuasively identified with Herodotus’ ‘kolonos at the entrance of the pass’ where the Spartiates and Thespians made their last stand and were all killed.6

6. The very first Thermopylae monument which Herodotus mentions is not an epitaph, but a long-vanished statue, a stone lion atop the kolonos which he says was ‘set up in honour of Leonidas’.7 Though the parallel in names made the choice especially appropriate (λέων, leon, lion, and Leonidas, ‘image/idea of a lion’), stone lions were also traditional Archaic and Classical grave markers used throughout Greece.8

An epigram for a lion tomb marker is attributed to the 5th-century BC poet Simonides in the Palatine Anthology, a much later collection of Greek poetry, but not mentioned by Herodotus:

θηρῶν μὲν κάρτιστος ἐγώ, θυατῶν δ’, ὅν ἐγώ νῦν φρουρῶ, τωίδε τάφωι λάινωι εἰμβαῖνός.

I, bravest of the beasts, now guard a man who was the bravest of mortals, after advancing up onto this tomb of stone.

The epigram comes in Anthologia Palatina 7.344A, where it is attributed to Simonides. The next epigram, 7.344B, is attributed to Callimachus, but could be a second stanza later separated from the first epigram:

ἀλλ’ εἰ μὴ θυμόν γε Λέων ἐμὸν οὐνομα τ’ εἶχεν, οὗκ ἂν ἐγώ τύμβωι τωίδ’ ἐπέθηκα πόδας.

But unless a Leon had possessed my courage and my name, I would not have set foot upon this tomb.9

6 For the ancient geography of Thermopylae, see Herodotus 7.198-201, and 7.225 (for the hill); for the modern geography of the area, and attempts to match it up with Herodotus’ description, see Pritchett 1958, 1985, 1989; Wallace 1980; Kraft et al. 1987; Kase et al. 1991; Szemler et al. 1996.

7 Herodotus 7.225: ὁ δὲ κολωνός ἐστι ἐν τῇ ἐσόδῳ, ἐκοῦ νῦν ὁ λίθινος λέων ἔστηκε ἐπὶ Λεωνίδη.

8 Lions were common Classical grave markers, from Cythera in the south to Attica, Boeotia, and up to Macedonia, as well as on the islands and Ionian coast. See Vermeule 1972; Bliquez 1975. More unusual is the lion on the Acropolis in Athens, said to have been dedicated by Leaina (Lioness), the mistress of Aristogeiton (Pausanias 1).

9 This translation and those of other Anthology epigrams adapted and modernized from the Loeb translation of Paton 1917.
6. Perhaps the lion of Thermopylae, marking both the grave of Leonidas and a military defeat, inspired the monumental lion erected just to the south at the battlefield of Chaironea over the Theban dead of the Sacred Band, just after their defeat by Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great there in 338 BC. Excavations at Chaironea uncovered both the lion himself, now restored, and mass graves of Greeks there, as well as of their Macedonian opponents below a mound across the plain.\(^{10}\) However at Thermopylae no trace of Leonidas’ lion or a body has ever come to light on the Colonus, merely a hundred or so bronze and iron arrowheads and a few spearheads, remnants of weaponry from both sides (now on display in Athens).\(^{11}\)

7. So, what else did Herodotus see on the kolonos at the middle gate, the hill of the last stand, in about 450 BC? He gives the text of three poetic epitaphs which he says were inscribed on steles, standing stones, at Thermopylae on the hill by the Lion.\(^{12}\) The first stele, he says, was set up over all the dead, both those who stayed with Leonidas, who were buried where they fell, and all those who died before (although it mentions only men from the Peloponnesus, and speaks of fighting, not dying), from the army of about 11,500 allied Greeks.

Here once they fought against three million:

four thousand from the Peloponnesus.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{10}\) For a Hellenistic epigram for the Greek dead at Chaironea, attributed to a certain Gaetulicus, see Anthologia Palatina 7.245.

\(^{11}\) Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. nos. 16128/1-16128/68, 16129/1-16129/5, 16130, 16133 (bronze arrowheads); 16132/1-16132/11, 16139/2-16139/17, 16140/1-16140/14, 16141/1-16141/5 (iron arrowheads); and 16137 (bronze spearhead), 16134, 16139/1 (iron spearheads) and 16138 (iron spearbutt). For more on the excavations, see Marinatos 1951.

\(^{12}\) Herodotus 7.228: βαρβατοὶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ταύτη τῇ περ ἐπεσον καὶ τοῖς πρῶτοις τελευτήσασι ἢ ὑπὸ Λεωνίδου ἀποπεμφθέντας οἰχεθαί, ἐπιγέγραπται γράμματα λέγοντα τάδε:

μυράσιν ποτὲ τῇδε τριηκοσίαις ἐμάχοντο ἐκ Πελοποννήσου χιλιάδες τέτορες.

ταῦτα μὲν δὴ τοῖς πάσι ἐπιγέγραπται, τοῖς δὲ Σπαρτιῶταις ἵδη:

ὁ Ξεινίην ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαμιώνωι ὅτι τῇδε κεῖμεθα, τοῖς κεῖνοις ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

λακεδαμιώνωι μὲν δὴ τούτῳ, τῷ δὲ μάντι τόδε:

μνήμα τόδε κλεινοῦ Μεγιστά, ὅν ποτε Μήδιοι

Σπερχείοι ποταμοῦ κτείναν ἀμειψάμενοι,

μάντιος, δὲ τότε Κήρας ἐπερχομένας ἀσφα εἰδώς

όσκ ἐτὰ Ψάρτης ἤγειμόνας προλιπέτειν.

ἐπιγράψασι μὲν νῦν καὶ στήληι, ἐξοχο τοῦ μάντιος ἐπίγραμμα. Ἀμφικτύνωις εἰς μεγίστης ἀμφικοιμησάτας: τὸ δὲ τοῦ μάντιος Μεγιστέω Ζωμώνης ὁ λεωπρέπες ἐστι κατὰ ξεινίαν ἐπιγράφας.

\(^{13}\) Translation of this and the following two epigrams adapted from Waterfield 1998, 484. This is the text as given by Herodotus 7.228 (though some mss. have the Doric Πελοποννάσου). Discussion by Page 1981, FGE 'Simonides’ 22a.
Then Herodotus gives the epitaph set up ‘for the Spartiates in the same place’, which he also calls ‘for the Lacedaimonians’, the most famous epitaph today, and the only one reproduced on the hilltop in modern times on a plaque rather than stele:

ὦ ξεῖν, ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὃτι τῇδε κείμεθα, τοῖς κεῖνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

Oh stranger, passing by, tell the Lacedaimonians that Obedient to their commands, here we lie.\(^{14}\)

And last of all, Herodotus says an individual epitaph stood over the grave of the Spartan seer Megistias:

μνήμα τόδε κλεινοὶ Μεγιστία, ὃν ποτὲ Μῆδοι Σπερχείου ποταμόν κτείναν ἀμειψάμενοι, μάντιος, ὃς τὸτε Κῆρας ἐπερχομένας σάφα εἰδὼς ὅπως Ἐτή Σπάρτης ἡγεμόνας προλιπεῖν.

This is the monument of famous Megistias, whom once the Medes killed, after they crossed the Spercheius River; a seer, who though he clearly saw Doom coming at that time could not allow himself to leave the leader of Sparta.\(^{15}\)

After quoting these three epitaphs, Herodotus concludes his discussion by stating that it was the Amphictyones, the sacred council of representatives from the ‘dwellers around’ Delphi (who also met yearly at Thermopylae), ‘who had arranged for both the epigrams and the steles’ on which they were inscribed, except for the epigram for the seer. ‘For Megistias the seer, it was Simonides son of Leoprepes who inscribed the epigram on account of their guest-friendship.’ Thus Herodotus seems to credit Simonides only with writing the epigram for Megistias, and the Amphictyonic council for overseeing the rest of the monumental commemoration— which combine durable stone markers (steles), and boastful but also wistful inscribed poetic texts in Greek. We may be certain, then, that by Herodotus’ day these three epigrams had been commissioned, inscribed on steles at Thermopylae as epitaphs, and set up, alongside a stone lion in honour of Leonidas alone.

However it is not clear how much Herodotus learned first-hand, where he got his background information, or if he copied the texts from the steles themselves.\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) Herodotus 7.228. Discussion by Page 1981, FGE ‘Simonides’ 22b. Modern poet A.D. Hope added a somber postscript in 1981: Linger not, stranger; shed no tear;/ Go back to those who sent us here./ We are the young they drafted out/To wars their folly brought about./ Go tell those old men, safe in bed,/ We took their orders and are dead. I thank William Grey for this reference.


\(^{16}\) For Herodotus’ interest in inscriptions, see West 1985.
The modern reception of these epigrams has been largely concerned with these questions, with establishing the 'authentic' inscribed texts (although the steles themselves have never been found), and with speculation about the precise role of Simonides, son of Leoprepes, of Ceos. For he is credited by later authors with writing all three Thermopylae epigrams given by Herodotus, not just that for the seer Megistias.

Simonides was already a renowned poet by 480 BC, when he was about 77 years old, but still actively composing in various genres.\(^{17}\) His reputation drew a number of commissions for performed and inscribed poems to him after the Persian Wars, though poems in his styles were also composed throughout Antiquity. He was experienced at writing epitaphs and battle memorials, saying that ‘words are the image of deeds,’ and seeking to evoke *sympatheia* in his readers.\(^{18}\) At Thermopylae, it seems the graves were marked with steles and epitaphs by the Amphictyones, the ruling committee of Apollo’s nearby sanctuary of Delphi, and by the friends and fellow-citizens of the deceased along with Simonides.\(^{19}\)

These poems have a strong meter and rhythm to aid memorization by the reader, who might then repeat the content to others and spread the memory of the man or men within the tomb orally. The sentiment of these texts is partly conventional, in that they praise the courage, virtue and fame of the dead, however the living are often mentioned too, as beneficiaries of the sacrifice. Whether as soldiers or sailors, those who died in the Persian Wars in other epitaphs are said to have ‘prevented all of Greece from seeing a day of slavery’, and ‘remain blessed and eternally young forever’.\(^ {20}\)

The words inscribed at Thermopylae gave voice to the otherwise silent dead each time they were read aloud. Simonides, at least, conceived his written words as a sort of eternal life for the war dead, though the writer can make the dead say whatever he wishes. In the case of Thermopylae, however, the sentiments had to be acceptable to the public body who put up the monument, in this case the Amphictyones, representatives from each of the many city-states around Delphi.

How long did these inscribed steles stand at Thermopylae, and who read their poetic epitaphs?

The 4th-century BC orator Lycurgus quoted the Lacedaemonian epigram in a prosecution speech, and paired it

\(^{17}\) Campbell 1991, *Greek Lyric III*, pp. 12-13 (introduction), 330-367 (testimonia), 368-591 (works), p. 13: Simonides wrote epinician odes, dirges, dithyrambs & choral poetry, elegiacs and epigrams, but the authenticity of most of the epigrams ascribed to him in Antiquity is questioned by modern scholarship.


\(^{19}\) Memory of the Thermopylae dead: Diodorus 11.11.2, 5, and attestation of Simonides’ authorship of the ‘Stranger’ epigram.

with an epigram on Marathon, in trying to persuade an Athenian
jury to convict a certain Leocrates of treason, for abandoning
Athens after the battle of Chaeronea. He called the
Thermopylae epitaph, along with that composed for Marathon,
‘witnesses of their virtue’ (epitymbia martyria) which were
inscribed ‘for all Hellenes to see’.21

However he quotes this Thermopylae epigram with a word on
the last line changed from the version given by Herodotus,
from ‘commands’ to ‘laws,’ rhemasi to nomimois, and this
difference was followed by Cicero and Strabo too.

ὦ ξεῖν, ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε
κείμεθα, τοῖς κεῖσθαι πειθόμενοι νομίμοις.

Oh stranger, tell the Lacedaimonians that here
we lie dead, obedient to their laws.

Lycurgus also seems to use a strange turn of phrase for the
specific location of the inscribed epigram, ‘at the boundaries
of life’, ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀρίοις τοῦ βίου, perhaps rather a corruption of ‘at
the boundaries of the tomb’, ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀρίοις τύμβου, where each
epigram might have stood.

Other Classical Athenian orators drew comparisons in
formal funeral speeches (epitaphioi logoi) with the dead of
Thermopylae: Lysias compared their valour to that of the
Athenians in the sea battle at Artemisium (though the latter
were victorious), and Hyperides praised Leosthenes’ seizure of
Thermopylae and the battle at Lamia after the death of
Alexander as outdoing in courage and counsel ‘the men with
Miltiades and Themistocles, and the others who by liberating
Greece brought honour to their country, glory to their
lives’.22

Cicero translated the Thermopylae epigram into Latin in
his Tusculan Disputations, in the context of a discussion
about death:

Dic, hospes, Spartae nos te hic vidisse iacentes,
dum sanctis patriae legibus obsequimur.23
Cicero thus compares the Spartans to the Roman legions of old as described by Cato, setting out cheerfully for a place of no return, and dying with similar animus, earning this epitaph written over them by Simonides. He then follows this up with Leonidas’ advice to breakfast well and dine in hell, and one of the other Spartans’ boast to fight in the shade of the expected hail of Persian arrows.

8. The epigram on the Lacedaimonians was also given in his description of Thermopylae by the geographer Strabo in the late 1st century BC, perhaps working from Apollodorus and potentially first-hand observation. He first described the geography of the pass, with the fortified narrows and hot springs consecrated to Herakles, then notes that this is the place where the force of Leonidas held off the Persians until cut off. ‘Now’, he continues, ‘their polyandrion is there, and steles, also the famous inscribed epigram on the stele of the Lacedaimonians, thus reading’:

Oh stranger, tell the Lacedaimonians that here we lie dead, obedient to their laws.

What was on the other steles, besides this famous epigram? We may assume those two others given by Herodotus, but there were likely other epitaphs which were once inscribed, here and/or elsewhere, in honour of those who died at Thermopylae.

The best evidence for the other epitaphs is that just before his description of Thermopylae, Strabo gives a description of the Locrian metropolis of Opous, not far to the east of Thermopylae, where he specifies that there were five inscribed steles set up at the Thermopylae polyandrion, and that the following epitaph was inscribed on the first stele:

These men of Opous, Metropolis of the Locrians of good laws, Once fell fighting against Medes for the sake of Greece.

There is also then a candidate for Strabo’s fifth stele in the geographical work of Stephanus of Byzantium, which is repeated in Eustathius’ commentary on the Iliad. It is the sole epigram ascribed to a certain Philiadas of Megara, in honour of the


Strabo 9.4.12-15 (geography of Thermopylae), 9.4.16 (epigram and description of battlefield monuments), with notes of Baladié 1996. See also Preger 1889, 1891.

τούτους δὲ φθιμένους ὑπὲρ Ἑλλάδος ἀντία Μήδων μητρότολος Λοκρῶν εὐθυνόμων Ὀποίες.

Thespian dead, who stayed with Leonidas to the end:

Men who once dwelt under steep (Mount) Helicon,
Due to their courage the wide land of Thespiae flourishes.²⁶

These local epigrams, and Herodotus’ first, more general
epigram on the 4000 Peloponnesians, were clearly much less
popular in Antiquity. The epigram for the Peloponnesians is
also given by Diodorus, probably still working from the 4th-
century BC historian Ephorus, with the change from Herodotus’
two million Persians instead of three (διηκοσίαις, or in some
mss. Doric διακοσίαις), and it is again paired with the Spartan
epitaph, but using laws (not Herodotus’ commands).
²⁷ Diodorus
(Ephorus) thus partly follows Herodotus, repeating that the
common epitaph and the Spartan one were both engraved at
Thermopylae for the Lacedaemonian dead; but he also does not
give an author’s name to the epitaphs, and he gives slightly
different texts from Herodotus.

A Hellenistic poet named Hegemon also composed an epigram
on the disparity of numbers at Thermopylae, possibly inspired
by both of Herodotus’ mass-grave epigrams:

Εἴποι τις παρὰ τύμβον ἵων ἀγέλαστος ἐδίτας
tοῦτ’ ἔτος: Ὅγδωκον τ’ ἐνθάδε μυρίάδας
Σπάρτας χίλιοι ἀνδρεῖς ἐπέσχον λήματι Περσῶν,

This epigram is attributed to Philiadas of Megara, and said to be for
Thespians killed by the Persians: Stephanus of Byzantium
Ethnika s.v. 33 Θεσση (Thespeia), in Billerbeck, M., ed.
Stephani Byzantii Ethnica, vol.
2: Delta-Iota, Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinea 43 (Berlin, de Gruyter,
2010). Eustathius also quotes this epigram on his commentary on the Iliadic
Catalogue of Ships entry for the city of Thespeia, and refers to the
Ethnika as a source, but also gives a slightly different (and better) text
of the epitaph, and an introduction from an unknown source: ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ
Βοιωτοῦ ἐπίγραμμα Φιλιάδου τοῦ Μεγαρέως τοιοῦτον ἐπί τοῖς ἀναμιθεῖος ὕπτο Περσῶν,
‘in this (city?, Thespeia?) among the Boeotians an epigram by Philiadas of Megara of
this sort (was) upon those killed by the Persians’: Eustathius Commentary
on the Iliad Book 2, line 498 (old p. 266, new p. 405), in van der Valk,
M., ed. Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis Commentarii ad Homeri
Iliadem pertinentes, vol. 1 (Leiden, Brill, 1971); see also Anthologia
1, pp. 438-439 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1944, reprint
1961); Page 1981, FGE Philiadas of Megara 1, pp. 78-79.

²⁷ Diodorus 11.33. In the mid-2nd century, Aelius Aristides also quoted this
epigram about 4000 from the Peloponnesus fighting 3 million, as an example of
sober Dorian and Lacedaemonian poetry which praises justifiably, after a
long sequence of Athenian epigrams related to the Persian wars, and just
before the Corinthian epitaph from the cenotaph on the Isthmus for their
dead at Salamis (Campbell 1991, pp. 530-531, Simonides XII): see Aristides
Lenz, eds. P. Aelii Aristidis Opera quae extant omnia (Leiden, Brill, 1976-
1980).

²⁶ Herodotus 7.228, on the common epitaph: ἐπέγραψαν δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἐν Θεσμόπολισι
ἀποδανοῦσι κοινῆ μὲν ἄτασι τάδε.
καὶ θάνον ἀστρέπτει: Δώριος ἁ μελέτα.

Some solemn traveler passing by the tomb might say this statement: ‘Here a thousand men of Sparta held back with their courage 800,000 of the Persians, and died without retreating: Dorian discipline.’

Though the situation is imaginary, the traveler in the poem is placed in a real enough situation, which assumes that both a tomb and readable epigrams giving numbers and the name of the Spartans were present at Thermopylae.

It is not until the 10th-century compilation of the Palatine Anthology, however, that Herodotus’ first and second epigrams were ascribed to Simonides. They both also appear in the roughly contemporary encyclopedia known as the Suda, under the entry for Leonidas (Λέωνιδης). There, however, they are not associated with Simonides.

After Herodotus, Simonides’ epitaph for Megistias reappears only in the Palatine Anthology, where the 10th-century scribe first labeled it as ‘on the tomb (taphos) of Megistias, the seer killed by the Persians,’ and the corrector added ‘from the History of Herodotus,’ but neither mentioned Simonides. Thus despite Herodotus specifically identifying it as a gift of Simonides to his friend, it did not find fame in Antiquity comparable to the first two epigrams. In fact, by the time Plutarch compiled his Spartan Sayings in the later 1st century, the seer who warned Leonidas of approaching doom had become ‘Themisteas’, and when Leonidas tried to send him away he said: ‘I was sent out to fight, not to carry messages’ (which is not in Herodotus 7.221).

9. What about the homefront away from the battlefield? Among Greek cities in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman eras, Sparta was notable for her close connections in local and panhellenic memory with the Persian Wars, along with religious piety and the perpetuation of archaic customs. King Leonidas was ceremonially reburied in Sparta some decades after his death, and either for the first or second time given all the entitlements of a royal Spartan funeral, including 11 days of mourning. A memorial to him was erected on the Spartan

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29 Anthologia Palatina 7.436, in a series of Spartan-related funerary epigrams, including 7.430-435, for the Battle of the Champions or unknown battles, culminating in two Thermopylae epigrams of Hellenistic authors, 436 and 437.
30 Anthologia Palatina 7.248-249.
32 Plutarch Spartan Sayings, Moralia 221D, with translation from Babbitt 1931, Plutarch’s Moralia Loeb vol. 3, p. 325. A slightly different version of this saying is given by Plutarch Moralia 866C.
33 For the Spartan interest in the past and tradition, see Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, pp. 190-211.
Acropolis near the civic temple of Athena Chalkioikos, along with one for the regent Pausanias, victor of Plataea. An annual festival, the Leonidea, was instituted by the Hellenistic era in honor of both Leonidas and Pausanias, featuring declamations in honor of the dead and games restricted to Spartans.

An inscription from a monument near the Spartan Theatre, just below the temple, records the regulation and reorganization of the Leonidea, probably in the early second century. Generous prize money for the games was given by the local Roman citizen Gaius Iulius Agesilaus, and the endowment for the festival was increased to 120,000 sesterces.

The ‘Persian Stoa’ was built on the Agora at Sparta in honor of Spartan involvement in the Persian wars, funded by spoils of war, and displaying many as well. Vitruvius describes the building, which has not been located archaeologically, as ‘a Trophy of Victory’ for the descendants of those who fought. Statues of the Persian commander Mardonius, and Queen Artemisia of Halicarnassus were there, while the Spartan commanders who resisted their advance were honored nearby, including Leonidas. The roof of the Persian Stoa was supported by statues of bound Persian captives.

This helmeted marble statue of a Spartan warrior was uncovered by the British excavations of 1925 between the Theatre and vestiges of the temple of Athena Chalkioikos, and almost immediately identified with Leonidas from the findspot and ‘the courage and the grim shrewdness’ of the face. Though both arms are missing, pieces of the greave-clad legs and a shield allow the restoration of a standing figure. Though the identification with Leonidas is unproven, the date is difficult to establish between Archaic and Classical in the absence of comparanda from Sparta. Modern Spartans have put this statue on the welcome sign to the city, and used it to

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35 Pausanias 3.14.1. Both memorials are called mnemata. On the commemoration of Leonidas in 5th-century BC Sparta, see Taraporewalla forthcoming, bringing together the evidence of Herodotus 6.58 (on the funerals of Spartan kings), Thucydides 1.134.4 (on Pausanias) and Diodorus 11.11.6.

36 IG V.1, 18-20, ed. Kolbe 1913. The dating is based on the prosopography of G. Iulius Agesilaus (athlothetae of Ourania in 97/8), as well as Spartan magnate and senator G. Iulius Eurycles Herculanus (born circa 73), for which see Bogaert 1968, p. 99; Spawforth 1978; Connor 1979; Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, 190-193.

37 Pausanias 3.11-16; Musti and Torelli 1991, pp. 192-3; Waywell 1999, p. 14. In his tour of the city, Pausanias also lists some 21 hero tombs in Sparta, along with 64 sanctuaries or temples.

38 Vitruvius 1.1.6.

39 It is intriguing that Vitruvius 1.1.5 is the only source for the story of the Caryatids, women of Caryae on the border with Arcadia, who supposedly Medized and were punished by servitude, leading to statues of captive women used as architectural supports having this name (though Granger 1931, p. 10, prefers to read Caria, women of Caria, and Cariatids, leading to another set of associations). See Plommer 1979, p. 100.

40 Woodward and Hobling 1923-1925, pp. 253-266, with the quotation on p. 266; Dörig 1987, 7-10, figs. 7-9, 11, 14; Palagia 1993, 167-175. The statue is now Sparta Museum inv. no. 3365.
mould a monumental bronze statue of Leonidas at the southern entry of their Acropolis by the modern athletics complex.

Herodotus seems to have had specifically Spartan sources for his account. He says that the Spartans ‘rewarded’ the murderer of Ephialtes in some way, even though that man had not killed the betrayer of the Thermopylae pass because of his treachery there (7.213). Herodotus also lists the genealogy of Leonidas in detail (7.204). He ‘was told’ the names of those who died beside Leonidas (7.224), and knows (but does not share) the names of all the 300 (7.224), probably inscribed at Sparta rather than at Thermopylae.\(^41\) He also says that the story that Leonidas’ head was cut off and paraded on a stake was used by the Spartans to inspire Pausanias before Plataea, and Diodorus says that the stories of Thermopylae were already used during the remainder of Xerxes’ campaign to inspire the Greeks.\(^42\)

Despite the central place which Herodotus holds today, the evidence of Diodorus and Plutarch show that other written narratives of Thermopylae were available, and popular, in Antiquity. Diodorus of Sicily, writing in the latter part of the 1st century BC in Rome, used the 4th-century BC account of Ephorus of Cyme along with other sources for his narrative of history in the 5th century BC, including Thermopylae.\(^43\) Diodorus’ book 11, which begins with the year 480 BC, is the first of his books on Greek history to be fully preserved, which perhaps testifies to the interest of ancient readers in the Persian Wars. There are noteworthy divergences from Herodotus’ account, most of which give a more vivid account. In Xerxes’ attack on Day 1, relatives of the Medes killed at Marathon are in the front lines, and there is more comment on the disparity in weaponry between Persians and Greeks.\(^44\) An anonymous Trachinian betrays the pass, but a certain Tyrrrhaistiadas of Cyme defects from the Persian lines to tell Leonidas.\(^45\) Then the Spartan king sends the others away, gathers his men and the Thespian ‘ready to die for Greece’ and glory, and launches a night attack on Xerxes’ camp and tent, which inflicts great damage but ends with all the attackers killed at dawn by javelins and arrows.\(^46\)

Besides this very different ‘last stand,’ of 500, the other notable addition in terms of memory are the noteworthy quotations of Leonidas, which also appear in Plutarch.\(^47\) Diodorus makes stirring praise of the excellence of this band of 500, who died for the ‘common salvation’ and ‘freedom’ of

\(^{41}\) On Herodotus’ admiration for Sparta and Spartans, especially Leonidas, see Tigerstedt 1965, pp. 81-107; Bradford 1994, pp. 64-66.

\(^{42}\) Herodotus 9.78-79; Diodorus 11.11.5.

\(^{43}\) Sacks 1990, pp. 49-51, on Diodorus’ Thermopylae and Spartans, and his dependence on Ephorus and Herodotus.

\(^{44}\) Diodorus 11.6-7.

\(^{45}\) Diodorus 11.8.

\(^{46}\) Diodorus 11.9-10.

\(^{47}\) Quotations of Leonidas at Diodorus 11.4 (few to guard pass, many to die) and 11.9 (breakfast quickly, dine in Hades). Conclusion at Diodorus 11.11.
Greece (not Sparta or Thespiae) after the night attack, saying this excellence was felt in Persia too, and by men of later times, who admired these men alone of the defeated, for their purpose in the face of (bad) Fortune (Tyche), and their preservation of their laws (shades of the Spartan epitaph).

Diodorus also gives the text of a eulogy ascribed to Simonides in honour of Leonidas and his men, set at Thermopylae (or Sparta), and perhaps an authentic composition for a Spartan or Panhellenic funeral service there (or a later memorial service). Diodorus gives it at the end of his account, as an example of interest on the part of poets, not just historians, in Thermopylae— an enkomion ‘worthy of their valour’ which inverts the normal conventions of a funeral dirge:

Of those who died at Thermopylae glorious is the fortune, fair the fate; their tomb is an altar, for lamentation they have remembrance, for pity praise. Such a shroud (or ‘funeral gift’, epitaphion) neither mould nor all-conquering time shall destroy. This precinct (sekos) of noble men chose the glory of Greece as its inhabitant; witness to this is Leonidas himself, king of Sparta, who left behind a great adornment of valour and imperishable glory.

This eulogy finds counterparts not only in Simonides’ other works, but also in the music and songs of Sparta as collected by Plutarch in his Spartan Customs, which were said to focus on those who had lived nobly, died for Sparta and joined the blessed. Plutarch also claims that Leonidas celebrated a ‘funeral game’ (epitaphion agona) with his men at Sparta before marching north, games which would be replicated in the festival of the Leonidea at Sparta for many centuries after Leonidas’ body was returned to Sparta.

10. Conclusions
Throughout Antiquity, then, monuments and commemoration for the battle of Thermopylae of 480 BC were concentrated at the pass itself and at Sparta. At the pass stood epitaph steles readable for Greeks, and a funeral lion: both indicating the dead of a battle, but potential symbols of victory or defeat. At Sparta, the Persian Stoa, Heroon of Leonidas and festival were all much more redolent of a victory as well as commemoration. For more details of these and other ancient legacies of Thermopylae, see my published article.

48 For the original performance of Simonides’ eulogy at a shrine at Sparta, see Bowra 1961, 345-349; for elsewhere see Podlecki 1968, p. 258.
49 Diodorus 11.11.6, translated by Campbell 1991, p. 425, as Simonides no. 531.
50 Plutarch Spartan Customs 14, Moralia 238A.
51 Plutarch de Malig. Hdt. 32, Moralia 866B.
52 Brown 2013.
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