HERODOTUS 1.51.3*

ABSTRACT
This article presents a new conjecture on Herodotus 1.51.3.

Keywords: Herodotus; textual criticism; anacoluthon; conjecture

καὶ πίθους τε ἀργυρέους τέσσερας ἀπέστησε, οἴ έν τῷ Κορινθίων θησαυρῷ ἐστάσι, καὶ περιμερανήμα διός ἀνέβηκε, χρύσευν τε καὶ ἄργυρευν, τῶν τῷ χρυσῷ ἐπιγράφαται Λακεδαμιώνοιον φαμένον εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθοῦ λέγοντες ἐστὶ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο Κροίσου, ἐπέγραψε δὲ τῶν τινῶν Δελφῶν Λακεδαμιώνοισι βουλόμενος χαρίζεσθαι.

Hdt. 1.51.3

The participles φαμένων and λέγοντες produce a clear syntactical discontinuity, and the phrase φαμένων εἶναι ἀνάθημα is rather abrupt. Solutions so far proposed are as follows. Replacing φαμένων εἶναι with φασὶ μὲν ἀνέκειν (Jackson, probante Wilson) resolves both problems and is palaeographically plausible. Nevertheless, the sentence becomes less concise because φασὶ refers to the opinion of a third party, which in this case does not seem necessary. Abicht tried to preserve the transmitted text by adding only the pronoun σφιέων after φαμένων, so that the newly resulting possession to the Lacedaemonians becomes clearer. More recently, Madvig’s conjecture τῶν τῷ χρυσῷ ἐπιγράφαται Λακεδαμιώνοιον φαμένον εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγον has been well received, providing as it does a text in which the vessel on which the inscription was to be read clearly appears as a ‘speaking object’.2

Herodotus is describing his visit to Delphi, during which time he had the opportunity to see the monuments and read the inscriptions himself, including those that had been rewritten to falsify the ownership of individual artefacts. In this passage, he focusses on the text of a specific inscription, with the genitive plural Λακεδαμιώνοιον referring to the Spartans’ claim that the vessel is their own offering to the temple of Delphi. But immediately afterwards he states that the basin belongs to Croesus and that one of the inhabitants of Delphi was responsible for the inscription, seeking to gain the goodwill of the Lacedaemonians.3 What the genitive plural of the inscription seemed to claim as a property right of the Lacedaemonians (Λακεδαμιώνοιοι) becomes meaningful if we add a dative of advantage (σφι) after the verb of saying (φαμένων), so that the Lacedaemonians are presented as the active claimer of the basin offered to

* I dedicate this contribution to my students of the course on Herodotus given at the University of Tübingen in the summer of 2022.


3 Hdt. 1.51.4 ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο Κροίσου, ἐπέγραψε δὲ τῶν τινῶν Δελφῶν Λακεδαμιώνοισι βουλόμενος χαρίζεσθαι, τοῦ ἐπιστάμωνος τὸ οὖν οἷον ὑπεμνήσσωμαι.

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Apollo, even though the operation of falsification was concocted without their knowledge by some Delphian.

In this light, write φαμέων <σφι> εἶναι ἀνάθημα. The dative is particularly welcome because, in similar passages where the attribution of a votive offering is specified, the author introduces the dative of the donor.4 This pronoun might have been more easily overlooked than Abicht’s σφέων, especially since the two consecutive syllables with -τ and ει- could be confused owing to itacism. Moreover, in Herodotus σφι/σφι (9 + 597x) is much more common than σφέων/σφέων (42 + 60x). Nor does this slight emendation risk oversmoothing Herodotus’ prose, which is at times rough, probably owing to a partial revision of the text by the author himself.5

Furthermore, it would be sufficient to imply here an αὐτῶν immediately after φαμέων to grasp the continuity between the Lacedaemonians and those who claim ownership of the offering. In this regard, one could also correct λέγοντες to λεγόντων since this would avoid the above-mentioned anacoluthon. However, anacoluthon is part of Herodotus’ prose,6 and in this case the unexpected nominative plural rhetorically highlights the false character of the inscription Λακεδαιμονίων more emphatically.7 The transmitted λέγοντες, in fact, constitutes an example of a hanging nominative,8 which points to a certain deviation in the regularity of the syntactic-grammatical links, without affecting the sense of the sentence.9

These emendations result in the following text and translation:

τὸν τὸ χρυσὸν ἐπιγέγρασται Λακεδαιμονίων φαμέων <σφι> εἶναι ἀνάθημα, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγοντες …

On the golden basin has been inscribed ‘of the Spartans’, who claim that it is their votive offering, although they say something false …

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4 Cf. Hdt. 1.92.1 Κροίσος δὲ ἐστὶ ἄλλα ἀνάθημα εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα πολλὰ καὶ οὐ τὰ εἰρημένα μοῦνα; 1.92.2 τὰ δ’ ἐν Βραγχίᾳ τῆς Μιλήσιος ἄναθημα Κροίσος, ὡς ἐγὼ πυθόμας, ἵσα τε σταθμὸν καὶ ὁμίου τοῦτο ἐν Δελφοῖσι. But see also 8.35.2 τὰ Κροίσου τοῦ Ἀλλάττεω ἀνάθημα.


6 H.W. Smyth, A Greek Grammar for Colleges (New York / Cincinnati / Chicago / Boston / Atlanta, 1959), §§3006–7 (‘Anacoluthon usually produces the effect of naturalness and liveliness, sometimes of greater clearness … Natural anacoluthon is seen in the loose and discursive style of Herodotus’).

7 Already G.F. Creuzer and J.C.F. Baehr (Herodoti Halicarnassensis Musae [Leipzig, 1856], 106) had noted that ‘in seqq. verbis sensum magis quam grammaticam structuram Noster respexit’, while W.W. How and J. Wells, A Commentary to Herodotus, Volume I (Books I–IV) (Oxford, 1912), 75 considered this anacoluthon to be ‘very harsh’.


9 See Hdt. 4.132.1 Δαρείου μὲν τὸν ἑτήμην ἦν γραμμὴ ἃν ἴκωσις ἐνακολούθησεν σφέως τὸν αὐτῶς καὶ γὰρ τε καὶ ὄσσος, εἰκότων τῆς; 3.16.3 τὸ ὁμοιοῦκα ἵσα τὸν κατακαίειν γε τοὺς νεκροὺς οὐδαμός ἐν νόμῳ συνεδρεύοντας ἐστὶ. Πέρησαν μὲν δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ εἰρημένης, τεθυραμβοῦσα νεκρὸν ἀνθρώπων. ΑὐτοτΡΟΦΗΣ δὲ δηνούμεται πῦρ ἑμερών εἶναι ἐμπάρχειν; and 8.49.2 αἱ γνώμοι δὲ τῶν λεγόντων αἱ πλείουσα συνεξέπτυσαν πρὸς τὸν Ἰσθμὸν πλαύωνται νεομάζειν πρὸς τὴς Πελοπόννησος. ἔπλεγοντες τὸν λόγον τόνδε. See also 7.157.2 ἄλλης μὲν γὰρ γενομένη πάσαν ἢ Ἑλλάς χεῖρι μεγάλῆ συνάγεται.