

Abstract

The settlement Artaphernes-Mardonius in Herodotus as an example of imperial nostalgia

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The descriptions of administrative changes undertaken by the Achaemenids after the Ionian revolt (Herodotus 6.42-43; cf. Diodorus 10.25) raise problems of interpretation, particularly with regard to the permanence of tribute down to the time of Herodotus and to Mardonius' establishment of democracies. These difficulties are lessened if one proceeds for the standpoint that these passages preserve a nostalgic, pro-Achaemenid perception of imperial rule among the Ionians. That Artaphernes' assessment was neither punitive nor constantly changing offers an unspoken, unfavorable comparison with Athenian imperial practice. Barbarian Mardonius, later nemesis of Athenians promising democracy, appears in his first campaign as the one who ushers in an age of political stability in Ionia. Similar nostalgic perceptions of an earlier imperial rule are found in modern colonial empires when the inhabitants passed as spear-won from one power to the next. That Achaemenid rule was a valued part of civic history is apparent from Tacitus 3.60-63 and from the Roman-era preservation of the dedication of Droaphernes and the so-called Letter to Gadatas.