

Philoxenia and Xenophobia in Ancient Greece

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Abstract

This paper examines the idea of philoxenia (i.e., friendship of hospitality) and xenophobia (i.e., be afraid of foreigners) in ancient Greece. It is argued that Ancient Greeks did not embrace the idea of philoxenia as this is demonstrated by their dislike of barbarians and other Greeks outside their own city-state. The dichotomy between Greeks and non-Greeks (barbarians) was so strong that shaped ancient Greek identity and culture. It still does today in synchronous Greece. Ancient Greeks were xenophobic rather than xenophiles. The alleged difference between Athens and Sparta was a difference of degree of xenophobic attitudes. Sparta practiced *Xenelasia*, i.e., expulsion of foreigners. An extreme version of xenophobic attitude. On the other hand, the city-state of Athens was not as xenophobic but this does not necessarily make them xenophiles. They were not afraid of foreigners because they considered themselves superior to any non-Athenian; Greek and non-Greek alike. Especially after the victorious wars against the strong Persian Empire, they believed that Greeks and barbarians were incapable of harming the glorious Athens. Within this context, Thucydides, in the 5th century BCE, using the occasion of Pericles' *Funeral Oration*, would write the well-known phrase that Athens "... is open to the world; we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". This was not a testimony of philoxenia but a defiance of a xenophobic attitude. On the other hand, Sparta's xenophobic attitude was based on very good practical reasons. They thought that foreigners might (a) spy on their city-state for military purposes and (b) change their spartan (frugal) way of private and social life. The latter is similar to the same arguments raised in the 20th century of the impact of international (mass) tourism on local cultures and way of life. Mass tourism is viewed as the Trojan Horse to dismantle local cultures and traditional ways of life. Evidence from other ancient sources, e.g., Aeschylus' *Perses* and *Suppliants* testifies the xenophobia of ancient Greeks. Based on this and other written ancient evidence, I conclude that ancient Greeks did not embrace the idea of philoxenia. Differences between the city-states account for variations in xenophobic attitudes as well as political (military) and social considerations.

Keywords: Ancient Greece, Philoxenia, Xenophobia, Barbarian, City-States.

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1. Introduction

Philoxenia means a friend of xenia (hospitality) and not a friend of a foreigner (stranger) as sometimes is translated or understood. For a high class philoxenia, ancient Greeks used the term theoxenia, e.g., a God's treatment of hospitality. This is also related to the ancient Greek Mythology when Gods disguised as humble strangers-guests visited mortals and asked for their philoxenia. This can have at least two interpretations. First, all guests-foreigners must be treated like Gods and offer them the best possible treatment with the least possible questions. Second, it may nevertheless be interpreted as a "threat" because the Gods may punish all those who refuse to accept guests-foreigners and reward those they do. The myth as it is stated does not falsify the second interpretation. Thus, it was not virtue which made ancient Greeks practice philoxenia but a fear of Gods and/or an expectation of material rewards. The second dominates today but it comes from tourists and not from Gods.

The classical ancient works of Homer (*Iliad and Odyssey*) and Hesiod (*Works and Days*) have many examples of philoxenia. Philoxenia is the idea (the philosophy) of welcoming a foreigner (stranger) to one's house, city and state. Xenophilia meant a friendship with a foreigner. It is the practice of the idea of philoxenia and it is the antithetical of Xenophobia, i.e., being afraid of a foreigner. The best-known testimony of xenophobia was the Greek/Barbarian dichotomy which was ubiquitous in all Ancient Greece. This is examined in the next section. Then I examine the idea and practice of philoxenia in two of the most important ancient Greek city-states: Athens and Sparta. It is well known and documented the antagonism between the two cities. Both cities in peace and war years considered themselves as being the leaders who can protect Greeks and Greece. Plutarch - *Apophthegmata Laconica* (69.8)¹, said that when a Spartan was told that Pindar said that Athens was the pillar of Greece, he responded that Greece would fall apart if it rested on any such foundation.

Both cities wanted to lead Greeks against the barbarians. As it turned out nobody achieved it. The honor to lead the Greeks against the barbarians came in the fourth century with the Macedonians and the Alexander the Great whom some Athenians considered a barbarian. Still today some Southern Greeks (Athenians) call Northern Greeks (Macedonians) as being non-Greeks. They do not use the term Barbarians but another word which starts with "B" and related to a neighboring country.

2. Barbarians and Greeks

The idea of welcoming and befriending non-Greeks was not part of the ancient Greek civilization. Non-Greeks were considered barbarians and uncivilized. However, the Greek/Barbarian polarity is not clear and changed during the early and late antiquity. Three criteria were used to distinguish Greeks from Barbarians: (a) language (xenolalia or barbarophone) (b) paideia (education) and (c) a Panhellenic character

¹<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0197%3Achapter%3D69%3Asection%3D8>

shown in common activities such as the Olympic Games and many other cultural contests.

Language

Language was an important demarcation line between Greeks and barbarians. In Homer's *Iliad* is recognized that all Hellenes (the name appears only once in his work) spoke the same language as this is manifested by the absence of any communication problem between themselves despite that they gathered from so many various and remote places [e.g., Crete, Western Greece (Akarnania), and Ionian islands which included the famous Ithaka of Odysseus; the main character of the homonymous work, *Odyssey*]. The Greek army besieging Troy had representatives from all four major ethnic groups: Dorians (e.g., Sparta), Ionians (e.g., Athens), Achaeans (e.g., Argos) and Aeolians (e.g., Thessaly and Boeotia). Each one had its own Greek dialect as modern Greece does.

In *Iliad*, the Trojans most probably spoke Greek because there were no communication problems with their Greek besiegers but it is not clear whether this was their mother tongue. What is known is that the Trojan army included non-Greek speakers who Homer refers to them as barbarophone; these were not the Trojans - otherwise Homer would mention them-, but the Karians who had sided with the Trojans in their battle against Hellenes. This is the only instance in the *Iliad* that Homer uses the word barbarian.

The importance of language in distinguishing Hellenes from Barbarians (or the "Others" as sometimes are called) is analysed by Ross (2005) with an emphasis on *Iliad*. This language homogeneity gave Hellenes a military advantage due to a better and fast communication during the battle over the cacophony of the Trojan army.

If for Homer is the language the criterion of separating Hellenes from Barbarians, Herodotus developed this argument even further by adding a few more conditions of "Greekness". The Hellenic (Ἑλληνικόν) ethnos, says the father of history [8.144.2], consists of all those who have (a) the same blood (ὁμαιμόν), (b) the same language (ὁμόγλωσσον), (c) the same gods (θεῶν ἰδρύματά τε κοινὰ) and (d) the same way of life or civilization (ὁμότροπα). To a certain extent, these four characteristics have survived in modern times to define ethnicity. However, strong written evidence exists which does not reject the hypothesis that these views were not shared by all Hellenes. One such strong voice emphasized the role of education as separating barbarians and non-barbarians.

Paideia defines Greekness

One dissenting strong voice came from Isocrates (BCE436-338). He offered an interesting antithetical view to that of Herodotus in defining Hellenism and Hellenes. It was not blood or language but paideia that separated Greeks from non-Greeks. Educated people could be called Greeks and the non-educated barbarians. I quote the pertinent phrase from Isocrates work *Panegyricus* (section 50):

<p>And so far has our city is superior in thought and in speech to the rest of mankind that her pupils have become the teachers of all others making the name of Hellenes not of a common race but of common intelligence, and that the name Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our paideia than to those who share a common character.</p>	<p>Τοσοῦτον δ' ἀπολέλοιπεν ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ λέγειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ὥσθ' οἱ ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασι, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποίηκε μηκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας παρά τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας.</p>
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Note: My translation is based on George Norlin but I have made many changes which in my view better depict the meaning of the ancient source. For example, he translates, *τῆς παιδείσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας*, as culture instead of paideia. His translation contradicts the first sentence of Greeks being the teachers of the world.

This is an excellent statement even if some Greek purists (nationalists) have tried to interpret it in a different way. A number of points should be mentioned. Irrespectively of how many times I read this excerpt, I always center my attention and interpretation on paideia (παιδείσεως). My reading of Isocrates is that unless someone acquires paideia (knowledge), Greek cannot be called. He would not become Greek; it can be called Greek. Or from a barbarian (without paideia) becomes a non-barbarian civilized (because of paideia). I do make a distinction between education and paideia in the same way that Adler (1982) does. Education includes vocational training; paideia is more than that. According to Adler paideia should prepare the students of any age (a) to earn a decent livelihood, (b) to be a good citizen of the world, and (c) to make a good life for oneself.

Isocrates alleged more than that. He said that it is not the race (γένους) that makes someone Greek but the intellect (διανοίας). It is not your nature (race) which makes you Greek but your ability to think and express yourself in a way that you could become a teacher of the rest of the world (ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασι). Isocrates says nothing about the language but I guess he thought that paideia without the knowledge of the Greek language was impossible. It is like English today, which a university professor in Greece has called it a Hellenic Dialect (Theophanides, 2013). This is another (technical) vindication of Isocrates definition of Greekness, i.e., the advanced Greek language (nous, gnosis, and above all philosophia) was used to enrich other languages.

Even though Isocrates mentioned that Greeks had paideia and the barbarians not, this was not true for all Greeks. Athenians themselves thought that their city-state was the polis of wisdom and they had a paideia far more advanced than any other Greek city. However, not all Greek cities were considered by Athenians as having paideia. Actually, as Plutarch mentions in his *Apophthegmata Laconica* (62.1)², Athenians considered the Spartans as ignorant or unlearned (ἄμαθείς). When this was pointed out to the Spartan King Pleistoanax, the son of Pausanias, by an Athenian rhetorician, he responded that this was true because it was only Spartans of all Greeks who did not learn anything evil from Athenians. This statement indirectly admits that Athenians were the pedagogues of the then known world.

²<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0197%3Achapter%3D62%3Asection%3D1>.

Panhellenism

Self-determination is not a criterion of belonging to a certain race. The race itself must accept you as belonging to the self-declared ethnicity. In ancient Greece this was testified with the Olympic Games. Only Greeks were allowed to participate in the Olympic Games and as a matter of fact Macedonians did participate. Alexander the Great competed in the Olympic games. This was not a persuasive evidence for Demosthenes who opposed the Macedonian emerging power which eventually became the leaders of the Panhellenic world in the 4th century BCE.

Contrary to Isocrates, Demosthenes considered the Macedonians barbarians; a Greek race whose ancestry can be traced a few centuries back to the city of Argos. Herodotus a century earlier narrates an incident with the King of Macedonia just before the Battle of Plataies. During this episode, Herodotus tell us that Alexander A' was sided with the Persian army -presumably by force. However, during the night he approached the Athenian army and gave them information about the next movements of the Persian army. He identified himself as a Greek who was the King of Macedonia.

Herodotus versus Isocrates

The difference between Herodotus and Isocrates is a difference of epoch. Isocrates lives in a different world in post-Persian war era which is best described by Aeschylus playwrights like *Perses* and *Suppliants*. Especially in the latter work, Aesculus provides a casting where the Greek/barbarian polarity is blurred. Mitchell (2006) correctly concludes on page 223 that:

The late 460s presented itself then as a time to reinvestigate relationships with a wider world in a sharp and incisive way. That the Greek-barbarian polarity now formed part of the vocabulary of Greek/non-Greek relationships is clear from the *Suppliants*. But the polarity itself did not necessarily, or not always, inform the perceptions of the relationship between the Greek and non-Greek worlds, or indeed the diplomatic and practical realities of that relationship. The discourse which sought to locate the Greeks in a 'whole world space' was investigated in greater depth and with greater sharpness. If Greek and barbarian were united by kinship (as the Danaids claim), and, more strikingly, if Greek was barbarian (through Hypermestra and Lynceus) and barbarian Greek (through Io), then questions were not only being aired about the polarity and its characterizing stereotypes, but also about the nature of Greekness itself and its relationship with the non-Greek world. By relocating the Hellenes in the wider world, and making Greekness non-Greek and non-Greekness Greek, the polarity was subverted. The analogue between Greek/barbarian, civilized/uncivilized, though often assumed to be in place until the late fifth century (yet already challenged in the Persians), was broken, allowing room and creating an 'ideological space' for the questions about the nature of barbarism and even different kinds of barbarism to develop in new directions, and also for new political attitudes to the Persian and in particular to Persian money.

One of the reasons why the dichotomy between Greeks/barbarian was subverted for a reason not mentioned in the above citation: non-Greeks showed an interest in paideia, especially the Greek paideia. If this is a correct interpretation, then the distinction of Greek/non-Greek is one of educated/non-educated and not having the same blood, use the same language, look the same (physiognomy), dress alike and worship the same gods. It is paideia, as Isocrates claim, which makes the difference between a barbarian and a non-barbarian. It still does today!

3. *Xenelasia*

Sparta practiced the expulsion of foreigners (called *Xenelasia*) who included barbarians and other Greeks alike. *Xenelasia*³ is a compound noun of ξένος (foreign, stranger) and the verb ελαύνω which had many meanings in ancient Greek. It definitely means pushing someone out. It may also mean that you kick someone out by beating him. This has created misunderstandings and misinterpretations. We have no evidence that Spartans beat the foreigners out of their city. On the contrary, we have many examples that foreigners were welcome.

One good example of philoxenia in Sparta was Paris of Troy. The story is well known not because of its importance but because it was narrated by Homer in his two masterpieces: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Menelaus, the King of Sparta, offered a philoxenia to Paris from Troy in return to Paris philoxenia a few years back when Menelaus had visited Troy and Paris accommodated him in his palace in Troy. Paris made bad use of philoxenia and run away with the beautiful Helen of Sparta who happened to be Menelaus' wife. The famous Trojan War had an excuse to erupt. The rest is known because of Homer. This one bad experience would have been sufficient to justify the practice of *Xenelasia* by Sparta. Paris was blamed and not Helen that left Sparta with her lover. Gorgias (483BCE-375BCE) wrote a masterpiece - *Encomium of Helen* (Ἐλένης Ἐγκώμιον) which praised Helen but said nothing about Paris. According to Gorgias (section 2), the name of Helen was synonymous with a calamity (ὁ τῶν συμφορῶν μνήμη γέγονεν) because of the Trojan war. He wanted to correct this misconception.

Many other examples have documented Sparta's philoxenia. The Athenian Alcibiades was welcomed but this was in the middle of the Peloponnesian War and Alcibiades escaped to avoid prosecution in Athens.

The Ancient Athenian historian and philosopher Xenophon (431BCE-354BCE) wrote about Sparta and gave a very persuasive explanation of *Xenelasia* similar to synchronous argument against tourism. It is of interest to note that the name of Xenophon means the voice (φωνή) or light (φως) of xenos (foreigner). The roots of the English words phone (φωνή) and photo (φως).

³The word is found in many ancient sources. In Plutarch's *Apophthegmata Laconica* (237a) the word is related to education or as it is stated "They learned what was necessary; all other knowledge was expelled both the teachers and their teaching. Their paideia was to lead and be led correctly and sustain the pain and win or die in battle" [Γράμματα ἔνεκα τῆς χρείας ἐμάνθανον· τῶν δ' ἄλλων παιδευμάτων Ξενηλασίαν ἐποιοῦντο, οὐ μᾶλλον ἀνθρώπων ἢ λόγων. Ἡ δὲ παιδεία ἦν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ ἄρχεσθαι καλῶς καὶ καρτερεῖν πονοῦντα καὶ μαχόμενον νικᾶν ἢ ἀποθνήσκειν]. Underlining was added.

In chapter 14 of his *Lacedaemonian Politeia*, Xenophon gave an interesting explanation of Sparta's attitude towards the non-Spartans⁴:

<p>There were alien acts in former days, and to live abroad was illegal; and I have no doubt that the purpose of these regulations was to keep the citizens from being demoralized by contact with foreigners; and now I have no doubt that the fixed ambition of those who are thought to be first among them is to live to their dying day as governors in a foreign land. There was a time when they would fain be worthy of leadership; but now they strive far more earnestly to exercise rule than to be worthy of it. Therefore, in times past the Greeks would come to Lacedaemon and beg her to lead them against reputed wrongdoers; but now many are calling on one another to prevent a revival of Lacedaemonian supremacy. Yet we need not wonder if these reproaches are levelled at them, since it is manifest that they obey neither their god nor the laws of Lycurgus.</p>	<p>[14.4] ἐπίσταμαι δὲ καὶ πρόσθεν τούτου ἔνεκα ξενηλασίας γιγνομένης καὶ ἀποδημεῖν οὐκ ἔξόν, ὅπως μὴ ῥαδιουργίας οἱ πολῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ξένων ἐμπύμπλαιντο· νῦν δ' ἐπίσταμαι τοὺς δοκοῦντας πρῶτους εἶναι ἐσπουδακότας ὡς μηδέποτε παύωνται ἀρμόζοντες ἐπὶ ξένης. [14.5] καὶ ἦν μὲν ὅτε ἐπεμελοῦντο ὅπως ἄξιοι εἶεν ἡγεῖσθαι· νῦν δὲ πολὺ μᾶλλον πραγματεύονται ὅπως ἄρξουσιν ἢ ὅπως ἄξιοι τούτων ἔσονται. [14.6] τοιγαροῦν οἱ Ἕλληνες πρότερον μὲν ἰόντες εἰς Λακεδαίμονα ἐδέοντο αὐτῶν ἡγεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τοῦς δοκοῦντας ἀδικεῖν· νῦν δὲ πολλοὶ παρακαλοῦσιν ἀλλήλους ἐπὶ τὸ διακωλύειν ἄρξαι πάλιν αὐτούς. [14.7] οὐδὲν μέντοι δεῖ θαυμάζειν τούτων τῶν ἐπιπόγων αὐτοῖς γιγνομένων, ἐπειδὴ φανεροὶ εἰσιν οὔτε τῷ θεῷ πειθόμενοι οὔτε τοῖς Λυκούργου νόμοις.</p>
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Xenophon's support for the practice of *Xenelasia* is similar to modern day arguments against tourism because local communities lose their identity. Spartans were well known for their unique life which even today has its own phraseology: spartan life (live with the absolute necessary and avoid excesses and luxuries) and laconic (taciturn). To be a Spartan was difficult for both men and women who had to train hard to stay fit (spartan girls had the fame that were slender and elegant because of physical exercise; after all the beautiful Helen of the Trojan War was from Sparta). Many stories survived about the laconic attitude of Spartans. A Spartan in the General Assembly called Apella said that for this issue he can talk all day. Right away they decided to ostracize him.

Similar to Xenophon is the argument made by Plutarch (AD46–c.120) in his book on *Parallel Lives* which had Lycurgus as its subject. Plutarch wrote (chapter 27)⁵:

<p>Indeed, nothing was left untouched and neglected, but with all the necessary details of life he blended some commendation of virtue or rebuke of vice; and he filled the city full of good examples, whose continual presence and society must of necessity exercise a controlling and molding influence upon those who were walking the path of honor. This was the reason</p>	<p>οὐδὲν γὰρ ἦν ἀργὸν οὐδὲ ἀφειμένον, ἀλλὰ πᾶσι κατεμίγνυε τοῖς ἀναγκαίοις ἀρετῆς τινα ζῆλον ἢ κακίας διαβολήν· καὶ κατεπύκνου παραδειγμάτων πλήθει τὴν πόλιν, οἷς ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ἐντυγχάνοντας ἀεὶ καὶ συντρεφομένους ἄγεσθαι καὶ κατασχηματίζεσθαι ἰόντας πρὸς τὸ καλόν. Ὅθεν οὐδ' ἀποδημεῖν ἔδωκε τοῖς βουλομένοις καὶ πλανᾶσθαι, ξενικὰ συνάγοντας</p>
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⁴ use the translation of Xenophon. Xenophon in Seven Volumes, 7. E. C. Marchant, G. W. Bowersock, tr. Constitution of the Athenians. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; William Heinemann, Ltd., London. 1925.

⁵Translation by http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Lycurgus*.html.

<p>why he did not permit them to live abroad at their pleasure and wander in strange lands, assuming foreign habits and imitating the lives of peoples who were without training and lived under different forms of government. Nay more, he actually drove away from the city the multitudes which streamed in there for no useful purpose, not because he feared they might become imitators of his form of government and learn useful lessons in virtue, as Thucydides says, but rather that they might not become in any wise teachers of evil. For along with strange people, strange doctrines must come in; and novel doctrines bring novel decisions, from which there must arise many feelings and resolutions which destroy the harmony of the existing political order. Therefore, he thought it more necessary to keep bad manners and customs from invading and filling the city than it was to keep out infectious diseases.</p>	<p>ἦθη καὶ μιμήματα βίων ἀπαιδευτῶν καὶ πολιτευμάτων διαφόρων. ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀθροισμένους ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ χρησίμῳ καὶ παρεισρέοντα εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἀπήλαυνεν, οὐχ, ὡς Θουκυδίδης φησί, δεδιὼς μὴ τῆς πολιτείας μιμηταὶ γένωνται καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν τι χρησίμον ἐκμάθωσιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὅπως μὴ διδάσκαλοι κακοῦ τινος ὑπάρξωσιν. ἅμα γὰρ ξένοις σώμασιν ἀνάγκη λόγους ἐπεισιέναι ξένους· λόγοι δὲ καινοὶ κρίσεις καινὰς ἐπιφέρουσιν. ἐξ ὧν ἀνάγκη πάθη πολλὰ φύεσθαι καὶ προαιρέσεις ἀπαδούσας πρὸς τὴν καθεστῶσαν πολιτείαν, ὡσπερ ἁρμονίαν. διὸ μᾶλλον ὤετο χρῆναι φυλάττειν τὴν πόλιν ὅπως ἡθῶν οὐκ ἀναπλησθήσεται πονηρῶν ἢ σωμάτων νοσερῶν ἔξωθεν ἐπεισιόντων.</p>
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Figueira (2003, p. 51) correctly points out that xenelasia was initiated to “... prevent cultural and political taint” and so much of a subconscious dislike of strangers. After all, as Pericles (Thucydides) claimed, this was equally applied to other Greeks and non-Greeks (barbarians) alike.

The issue of the expulsion of foreigners in Ancient Sparta is well established and is well explained by reasons which are germane to today’s world of massive tourism. Plutarch in his work on Agis makes a note that in Ancient Sparta foreigners were not welcomed and were pushed out of the city but without hurting them. No force was used or as Plutarch said it (*Agis*, chapter 10) “...αὶ γὰρ ἐκείνους ἤλαυνεν οὐ τοῖς σώμασι πολεμῶν”.

Plutarch, in his *Apophthegmata Laconica* (224a-224b), gives a very good example on the issue of *Xenelasia* and the corruption of Spartans by non-Spartans (foreigners).

<p>The tyrant of Samos Maiandros after he fled to Sparta because of the Persian invasion showed off his wealth of gold and silver urns offered them to him (means Cleomenes II) without accepting anything he was afraid that others citizens may accept them, he went to the ephors and said that it is best for Sparta to expel him from Peloponnesus before something bad happens. They obeyed and expelled Maiandros the same day.</p>	<p>Μαιανδρίου δὲ τοῦ τῆς Σάμου τυράννου διὰ τὴν Περσῶν ἔφοδον εἰς Σπάρτην φυγόντος καὶ ἐπιδείξαντος ὅσα κεκομῖκει χρυσεὰ τε καὶ ἀργύρεα ἐκπώματα χαριζομένου τε ὅσα βούλεται, ἔλαβε μὲν οὐδέν, εὐλαβούμενος δὲ μὴ ἑτέροις τισὶ τῶν ἀστῶν διαδῶ, πορευθεὶς ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐφόρους ἄμεινον εἶναι ἔφη τῇ Σπάρτῃ τὸν ξένον ἑαυτοῦ τὸν Σάμιον ἀπαλλάττεσθαι τῆς Πελοποννήσου, ἵνα μὴ πείσῃ τινὰ τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν κακὸν γενέσθαι. Οἱ δὲ ὑπακούσαντες ἐξεκήρυξαν τὸν Μαιάνδριον αὐτῆς ἡμέρας.</p>
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Note: Author’s translation.

Cleomenes II, King of Sparta (BCE369-309), advised the five ephors of Sparta to apply the law of xenelasia to Maiandros the tyrant of Samos who had fled his island because of a Persian invasion and found refuge in Sparta because he was shown off

his wealth and there was a danger to corrupt the citizen of Sparta. The same day a decision was made to expulse him.

Spartans were Greek despite the fact that they apply the law of xenelasia to Greeks and non-Greeks alike. Plutarch in his *Apophthegmata Laconica* when he discusses Leonidas of the Thermopylae, he claims that when he was leaving Sparta for the battle of the Thermopylae Leonidas said in response to questions of how to fight the barbarians, he stated that he is going to die for the Greeks. Non-Spartan Greeks were not welcomed in Sparta but they distinguished their own race (Greek) from the non-Greek.

Actually, Pericles accused Spartans that they practiced *Xenelasia* to Athenians and all the Greek allies of Athens in addition to the barbarians. Pericles asked Sparta to change that but it is not clear whether he asked to restrict xenelasia to non-Greeks or to abolish altogether. But Athens itself was not so open of a city as Pericles claimed.

Plato and Aristotle make a note of Xenelasia as well. Both relate it to the theme that a foreigner might impinge on the customs and ethos of the host city; especially if this city is more advanced in terms of morality and simplicity.

4. Athens was not so Xenophile

Pericles was very cocky when he was talking about Athens of his time (430 BCE). Thucydides re-counted what Pericles most probably said in his masterpiece of the *Peloponnesian War*. It is there that Pericles makes the claim that Athens was open to the world. Non-Athenians can come see and learn. The interpretation that the city of Athens practiced philoxenia would be a citation out of context. The motivation is not xenophilia but arrogance. Pericles claims that Athens had nothing to fear from foreigners coming to the city.

And unlike Spartans, Athens would never practice *Xenelasia*. On the contrary, Pericles used the Spartan practice of Xenelasia to respond to Spartan's demand to open their ports to Megarian commercial ships. As Thucydides has recorded (1.144.2), Pericles suggested to the Athenian Demos to respond as follows to Sparta's claims (my translation):

We will allow Megareis to use our markets and ports if the Lacedemonians stop practicing xenelasia towards us and our allies.

Μεγαρέας μὲν ὅτι ἐάσομεν ἀγορᾶ καὶ λιμέσι χρῆσθαι, ἦν καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ξενηλασίας μὴ ποιῶσι μήτε ἡμῶν μήτε τῶν ἡμετέρων ξυμμάχων

Note: Author's translation.

Here Pericles made clear that Sparta's xenelasia was extended to Athenian citizens and their allies. Thus, Sparta was not only xenophobic⁶ but they were afraid of all other Greeks who were not their allies. This reinforces the argument made by Xenophon that Sparta's xenelasia was related to the fear that the enemies (Greeks

⁶The term xenophobic should be distinguished from the term misanthropic. The latter is more general and applies to all human beings irrespectively if they foreigners (barbarians) or not.

and non-Greeks) might spy by visiting their city. From the above statement one may not conclude that Pericles and the city of Athens was not xenophobic.

5. Conclusions

Greeks were xenophobic. They were the ones who coined the term Barbarians which is still used today by many other ethnicities. They are also xenophobic. If Greeks showed xenophile behaviour this was done either because they feared the punishment from Gods and/or they were expecting material gains. Today these material gains are obtained by foreign tourists from the money they spend when they visit the country.

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