

Kiabara

University of Port Harcourt Journal of the Humanities



ISSN 03318168; e. ISSN:24889695

Volume 22 Number 2 Harmattan 2016



Editor's Note.

This is the first issue of *Kiabara* under the current Editorial board. We welcome you to the rebranded, peer-reviewed journal of the Humanities. We apologize for the unusually long delay which was caused principally by lack of funds. We also had to grapple with the rather slow response from many of our assessors. Again owing to a printer's error, our Call for papers was without a deadline. Consequently we had a bumper harvest of more than 80 contributions. Getting all these assessed at the same time proved to be an uphill task. However we will continue to select from this large pool for the next 2 or 3 issues. We therefore plead with our contributors to bear with us while we assess their papers for subsequent issues. Indeed there may be no further Cfp until we have harvested the best publishable papers from the current stock. Happy reading as we prepare for the next issue.

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What was the Notion of 'The Other' in Antiquity? An Examination from the Perspective of the Ancient Greeks

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Abstract

The idea of 'the other' and 'otherness' often relates to the state of a group being different from certain individuals, groups or peoples. Over and over again, a greater or superior group, using certain social distinctiveness, stereotypes, or identities that are often seen as natural and innate, conceives of the lesser group as constituting 'the other(s)', that need(s) refinement, enlightening, or acculturation. In many quarters, 'the other' is conceived as those who do not speak one's language. Going back to the remote Classical antiquity, where one might least expect a prevalence valence of social distinctiveness, identities or stereotypes conjured among definite groups, this paper examines the notion of 'the other' and 'otherness' as it relates to the ancient Greeks and their conception of other peoples. It identifies the term *barbarian* as the Greeks' equivalent of 'the other'. Etymologically, the barbarian refers to a foreigner, one whose language

and customs differ from the native speaker's; and within the Judaeo-Christian civilization, he is a gentile outside the circle of the Christian faith. Using the works of Greek historians such as Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus and others to provide insight into the Greeks' general perception of these 'others', the paper submits that the word *barbarians* was used for all non-Greek-speaking peoples, including Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, and Persians. The Greeks' thought set the tone for the everyday pejorative meaning given to the barbarian (barbaric, barbarism) as a rude, crude, wild, uncultured, uncivilized person, who has no sympathy with literary culture; he is just a little distinguished from savage or beast.

Key Words: Other, Otherness, Barbarian, Ancient Greek

Introduction: 'The Other' and the Barbarian

Today, the idea of 'the other' and 'otherness' relates to the state of being different from certain individuals, groups or peoples. It focuses on how majority and minority identities or distinctiveness are construed; with how the politically, socially or economically greater group or people determine the control of common resources in a multi-ethnic or racial setting. Oftentimes, that greater or superior group conceives of the lesser group as constituting 'the other(s)'. Social distinctiveness or identities are many and are often seen as natural and innate stereotypes though this is sometimes conjured by the society¹. These stereotypes are markers which show the way individuals and groups perceive established societal categories within their societies. The distinctiveness or identities could take the form of ethnic, cultural, gender, racial, class, religious, language or other strictures. These, then, determine ideas about who we are, who we think some people are, how we think they should be seen, treated or interacted with. Thus, certain distinctiveness or identities convey the notions of social exclusivity, belongingness, cultural or ethnic affiliation, racial membership, or other socially construed attachments². As such, 'othering' can be seen as a form of discrimination of a people or group, different from one's own collective social norm or background, based on certain distinctiveness or identities. And since they are neither 'our' group nor part of 'us', they are thought of as deviants in need of refinement, finesse, acculturation, help, enhancement and education by the (our) group that is 'othering' them³.

¹ Miller J. 2008. 'Otherness' in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., pp. 558-591.

² Bullock A. & Trombley S. 1999. 'Otherness' in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. 3rd ed. UK: Harper Collins, p.620.

³ Gallaher C. et al. 2009. 'The Other' in *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, SAGE Publications Inc. pp.328-338.

In antiquity, the Greek notion of 'the other' found parallel in the term *barbarian*, the peoples whom the Greeks considered as socially inferior and were so discriminated against using certain markers or identities. In everyday idiomatic or figurative expression, a barbarian refers to an individual who is deemed to be brutal, cruel, warlike and insensitive to the feelings of others or his environment⁴. It is generally held that a barbarian is an uncivilised and primitive person, who lacks refinement, learning, and artistic or literary culture, something akin to what the Yoruba of south-west Nigeria would call *Ará-oko*⁵. It is usually used today in a pejorative sense. A 'barbaric' act, therefore, is an act that is 'cruel and brutal; excessively harsh or vicious'. It is an action or behavior that is 'coarse and rude; uncivilized'⁶. Semantically, the word *barbarous* is summarized in the *OED*⁷:

The sense of its development in ancient times was (with the Greeks) 'foreign, non-Hellenic'; later 'outlandish, rude, brutal'; (with the Romans) 'not Latin nor Greek,' then 'pertaining to those outside the Roman Empire'; hence 'uncivilized, uncultured,' and later 'non-Christian,' whence 'Saracen, heathen'; and generally 'savage, rude, savagely cruel, inhuman'.

'Barbarian' is from the word *barbaros*, (βάρβαρος or βάρβαροι, *barbaroi*, plural), which is first a Greek phenomenon that came into usage in the fifth century B.C. to mean those of 'other' cultures who were non-Greeks. The word was doubtless not in use in the early archaic history of Greece, for it was not used by Homer, the most extant and admired of all Greek poets. Rather, the word *barbarophonoi* (βάρβαρόφωνοι, of incomprehensible speech) in the *Iliad* was used to signify not only those who spoke a non-Greek language but also those (Greeks and non-Greeks) who spoke Greek badly⁸. And as can be inferred from Thucydides⁹, before the fifth century, the Greeks' notion of barbarians as 'the other' - inferior and crude - was not known. Homer did not use any term

⁴ Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1972, pg. 149, Simon & Schuster Publishing

⁵ In *A Dictionary of the Yorùbá Language*, Ibadan: U.P. Plc, (2008) the entry for *Ará-oko* is 'boor, bushman, clodhopper' reflecting the crudity of the one who is called a barbarian. The entry for *barbarian* itself is *alāìgbédè* (a foreigner who does not native language); *alāimoyé* (the one without wisdom or learning); *èniakénià* (worthless brute). For *Barbarism*, it is *aimò iwà hu* (lacking in proper behaviour); *iwà -aimoye* (foolish act, unwise behaviour); *iwà ára-oko* (rude, savage act or behaviour); *iwà ailájú* (uncivilized, uncultured act or behaviour).

⁶ Chambers 21st Century Dictionary. 1999. p.103. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd.

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary. 2009. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸ *Iliad*, 2.867

⁹ Thucydides. 1.3

denoting barbarian, because the Greeks of his time did not make any distinction between themselves and the barbarians. However, in the fifth century, the term was used by some Greeks to deride fellow Greek tribes and states in a pejorative and politically motivated manner, almost similar to the way it is used pejoratively today. The Athenians, for instance, derided other Greeks such as the Epirotes, Macedonians, Boeotians and Aeolic speakers including fellow Athenians¹⁰. Therefore, when Homer referred to the Carians, fighting for Troy during the Trojan War, as *barbarophonoi* (βαρβαρόφωνοι, people speaking in foreign language, incomprehensible speech), he did not mean that they were barbarians in the strict Greek sense of the word, meaning those outside the circle of Greek civilization, rather, he meant that they spoke an unintelligible language.

Greek Markers of the Other

According to Strabo, Hecataeus, one of the earliest Ionian logographers of the sixth century B.C, was the first to make a distinction between the Greeks and 'the others', when he says: 'Before the Greeks, the inhabitants were Barbarians'¹¹. In the early fifth century B.C., after their victory over the Persians and their large allies, the Greeks in earnest developed the feeling of superiority over non-Greek speaking peoples, particularly their enemies who were then regarded as *barbarians*. In the same century, Simonides (c 556-468 B.C.) of Ceos hinted that the Greeks of Sicily, with tyrants Gelon of Gela and Theron of Acragas as the leaders, defeated the Carthaginians and referred to them as the barbarian race. And so from this period onward, the Greeks began to consider themselves superior to all non-Greek speaking peoples of the ancient world and they reflected this in their early works of this period. For instance in the *Suppliant Maidens* of Aeschylus, the Greek king says to the Egyptian herald:

You herald, being a barbarian, should feel proud for having
to deal with Greeks, for as a herald you reason very wrongly
and will never hit at a point¹².

Generally, markers such as race, nationality, sex, religion, occupation, family, age, marital status language and culture determine the distinctiveness or identities of people or group. From the ancient Greeks' perspective, one of the main markers of 'otherness' was language variation. For specificity, the markers of language and culture shall suffice here. Thus, in a dialogue between Agamemnon and Teucer in *Aias* (*Ajax* of Sophocles), the former told the latter to bring an interpreter, a freeborn man, to plead his case, because when Teucer speaks, he cannot understand him, because he (Agamemnon) does not

¹⁰ Baracchi, Claudia. 2014. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle*. Bloomsbury Academic Publishing. p. 292

¹¹ Strabo. 7. 321.

¹² Aeschylus. *Suppliant Maidens*, 914

understand a barbarian language¹³. Thucydides said that the Greeks admired those who spoke the Greek language and imitated Greek ways of life¹⁴. From Herodotus (484-420 B.C), we know that Egyptians also called those who did not speak their language barbarians. The Greeks did not just use the term 'barbarians' to mean non-Greeks of the East and those outside their immediate sphere of influence. They also applied it to the Romans and metaphorically to anything rude, crude or uncivilized. Accordingly, some Roman writers frowned at this for, in their opinion, the Greeks were not more civilized than the Romans. This resentment is evident in Pliny the Elder¹⁵: 'They call us, too, Barbarians (foreigners), and insult us more foully than others do, when they apply to us the term *Opici*' (stupid, coarse, uncultured). Similarly Cicero¹⁶ also reacts against the Greeks:

'Was Romulus a king of Barbarians? If, as the Greeks say, everybody is either a Greek, or a barbarian, I fear he was a king of Barbarians. But if the name is to be applied to a mode of life and not merely to language, then the Greeks are no less barbarians, I think, than the Romans'.

In the New Testament Christian circle, language was also clearly used as a distinguishing factor for 'otherness'. In the *King James Authorized Version of the Holy Bible*, the writer of the Acts of Apostles used the term 'barbarian' to refer to the people on the island of Melita, who did not speak Greek. 'And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer...'¹⁷ In the same vein, apostle Paul himself says: 'I am a debtor to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise'¹⁸. By barbarians here, he meant the gentiles who did not speak the Greek language. To emphasise the importance of language, he says¹⁹:

Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

By voice, Paul meant 'language', for different voices (languages) are intelligible to those who speak them.

A barbarian was also perceived as inferior in terms culture, law and social being. By the cultural marker, the Greeks attached certain racist thoughts to the barbarians, who were seen as uncivilized by nature. This perception was facilitated by the growth of slavery as well established socio-political

¹³ Sophocles. *Ajax*, 1226ff

¹⁴ Thucydides, 7.63.

¹⁵ Pliny, *N.H.*, 29.1.7.

¹⁶ Cic. *De Rep.* 1.58

¹⁷ Acts, 28:4

¹⁸ Rom. 1: 14

¹⁹ I Corinth. 14, 11

institutions in many parts of Greek city-state, especially Athens. The institution of slavery was, indeed, a well-accepted feature of many societies in the ancient world. Huge concentrations of slaves, both skilled and unskilled, were drawn to Greece from all over the lands around the Mediterranean and Black Sea, such as Thrace and Taurica. Several also came from eastern Asia Minor and these were the Carians, Lydians, and Phrygians who worked under especially brutal conditions in silver mines like the one at Athens' Laurium. Since these slaves – certainly different from free citizens confined for debt bondage – were of foreign origin, they were regarded as barbarians. This led many Greeks, including the educated elite, to argue that non-Greek speaking peoples should be slaves by nature. For instance, Aristotle²⁰ submitted that 'barbarians are slaves by nature'.

The Greeks' notion of barbarians as slaves by nature can be seen in Haarhoff, who himself, cited the remark of Coleman Philipson²¹:

With the Greeks, all other peoples were looked upon as barbarians and were regarded as having been ordained and intended by nature to be the slaves of the Greeks. And he further remarked that the adoption of any method to carry out this intention be it of a forcible, or of a deceitful nature, was assumed justifiable in the eyes of the gods.

Thus, the discrimination and contemptuous feeling of a people, race or group over another could be said to have been deeply propagated by the Greeks right from the fifth century.

In antiquity, the use of the word 'barbarian' with contemptuous cultural coloration was apparently found in the early Judaea-Christian circle. Like the Greeks, it is known that the Hebrews also held the opinion that, apart from them, the rest of the world consists of the Gentiles, non-Jews, who were garbed with the a contemptuous labels of 'the barbarian', which St. Paul later tried to mitigate in the Acts of Apostles and other letters. For instance, in the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament, Gentiles (barbarians) could **not**:

- 1) Eat the Passover without being circumcised (Ex. 12:43, 45)
- 2) Eat holy things (Ex. 29:33; Lev. 22:10-13)
- 3) Be anointed with the holy oil (Ex. 30:33)
- 4) Take part in the tabernacle activities (Num. 1:51)
- 5) Have part in the priesthood (Num. 3:10)
- 6) Offer incense to God (Num. 16:40)
- 7) Come near the priests while in service (Num. 18:4, 7)
- 8) Be king over Israel (Deut. 17:15)
- 9) Be exempted from paying interest (Deut. 23:20)
- 10) Marry widows in Israel (Deut. 25:5)

²⁰ Aristotle. *Politics*. 1.2-7; 3.14; cf. 54.8, 55.1

²¹ Haarhoff, T.J. *The Stranger at the Gate*. p.218

The Judaea-Christians not only referred to the gentiles as barbarians, they also showed some elements of spiritual pride by equating gentiles with heretics and pagans²². Thus, it can be noted from history of the past that cultural or racial discrimination is not a phenomenon peculiar only to the modern world. Fortunate and advanced groups, since the ancient times, sometimes treat less privileged groups as 'lesser breeds without the law' by propagating pseudo-biological, physical and other cultural inequalities which are then imposed on the said inferiors. The 'barbarians' in the ancient world, then, can be compared to the modern day minority people in a society or the colonized African and Asian migrants in Europe and America, whose overlords the Greeks and the Romans fortuitously represented.

Ancient Greeks' General Perception of the Barbarians

Many ancient writers have made varied remarks about the Greeks' feeling of superiority over the barbarians and their general thoughts of the non-Greek speaking peoples. A close study of the writers, however, reveals that some of them did not hold consistent views of status of the barbarians. Sometimes, one may find in a writer differing viewpoints, expressing both admiration and revulsion for the people. For instance, in Herodotus, both pro and anti-remarks were made about the barbarians. The same conflicting perspectives can be found in the works of Aristophanes (c.450-385 B.C) and Thucydides (c.455-400 B.C.). Both Greek writers divided mankind into Greeks and barbarians. Thucydides did not only recognise this division and the superiority of the Greeks over the barbarians, but also accepted it as a further stage in the development of Greek civilization²³. However, he did not see it as a difference that had been fixed by nature. But behind the mind of the comedian, Aristophanes²⁴ and others, there was real die-hard contempt for the barbarians.

Generally, the Greeks attributed the barbarians' physical, ethical, cultural and intellectual distinctiveness to the variations of their climate and environments. Among the Greek writers who shared the Greek geographical theory was Herodotus. According to him, the river Nile and the Egyptian climate had a peculiar effect on character and institution of the Egyptians. Thus, environmental factors were responsible for the Egyptian reversal of several customs of mankind:

As the Egyptians have a climate peculiar to themselves, and their river is different in its nature from all other rivers, so have they made themselves customs and laws. Among them, the women buy and sell, the men abide at home, and weave;

²² cf. Rom. 3:1-2; 2:12-29; Eph. 2:12,19

²³ Thucydides. 1. 82

²⁴ Aristophanes. *The Clouds*. 100.

and whereas in weaving all others push the wool upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards. Men carry burdens on their heads, women on their shoulders. Women pass water standing up, men sitting. They relieve nature indoors, and eat out of doors in the street, giving the reason that, things unseemly but necessary should be done in secret, things not unseemly should be done openly. No woman holds priestly office, either in the service of goddess or god; only men are priests in both cases. Sons are not compelled against their will to support their parents, but daughters must do so though they be unwilling²⁵.

Sophocles seemed to have shared the same opinion with Herodotus when he made Oedipus contract his daughters and sons, and referred to Egypt (a barbarian land) as 'a land where women toil to provide food for their sustenance'²⁶.

The Greeks thought of the barbarians as a wicked and cruel lot, who engaged in various acts of savagery. Euripides, the fifth century Greek tragedian, among other writers, severally emphasized the cruelty of the barbarians in his plays, holding the opinion that they were viler than the Greeks²⁷. Isocrates (436-338 B.C) commented that they were no less good than animals, stating that the difference between a Greek and a barbarian is no less different than what exists between a man and a beast. In other words, the barbarians were estimated as sub-human beings, hardly better than dumb animals²⁸. Alexander the Great, according to Plutarch²⁹, supposed that the good man was the real Greek, a well-civilized man, as opposed to the uncultured man, while the bad man was the real barbarian. As savages who lived like beasts, the Greeks believed that barbarians spent their days in open spaces devoid of shelter and cared less about decent food and clothing. According to Diodorus and Livy, the barbarians were a stock of peoples who lacked reasoning faculty and self-control³⁰.

Like many of his contemporaries, Diodorus associated the temperament of the barbarian with that of a wild beast. As such, he used the savage Ethiopians to demonstrate the way barbarians lived like wild beasts:

As for their spirit, they are entirely savage and display the nature of a wild-beast, not so much, however, in their temper as in their ways of living; for they are squalid all over their

²⁵ Herodotus. 2. 35.

²⁶ Sophocles. *Oedipus at Coloneus*. 337ff.

²⁷ Euripides, *Troades*, 764.

²⁸ Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 293.

²⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 329.

³⁰ Diod. Sic. 3.49, Livy, 22.22

bodies, they keep their nails very long like the wild beasts, and are as far removed as possible from kindness to one another; and speaking as they do with a shrill voice and cultivating none of the practices of civilized life as these are found among the rest of mankind, they present a striking contrast when considered in the light of our own custom³¹.

Some barbarians were also represented as going practically naked, caring little about clothing. Ndubokwu, explaining the mind of Diodorus, noted that Ethiopian barbarians wore no clothes; instead, they used whatever they could lay their hands upon to protect themselves from the heat of the sun. Both the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi were barbarians who generally went about naked throughout their entire lives³².

A significant Greek perception of the barbarians relates to moral laxity. Strabo attributed some improvements in their moral laxity to the influence of Greek civilization. According to him, until the coming of the Greeks with their decent mannerisms, sexual habits and luxurious life styles, the barbarians lived as uncivilized and uncultured peoples, who displayed their primitiveness by sharing their wives and children in common. They were also conceived as peoples lacking good rulers. It is no surprise then that, even great Greek thinkers, such as Plato and Aristotle as shall be seen below, referred to the barbarians as slaves and propagated the common ideology of the superiority of the Greeks over other peoples. It is known that Pericles, the notable Athenian statesman, likewise promoted this Greek superior feeling in Imperial Athens when he says:

It is right and reasonable (*eikos*) that Greeks should rule over Barbarians and not Barbarians over Greeks, for these are slaves and those, free³³.

For emphasis, the Greeks believed that barbarians were peoples who should naturally be slaves, for they were incapable of self-rule. The Greek orator, Demosthenes, remarked that it is right for barbarians to be ruled by Hellenes (Greeks). To be noted also is the statement credited to Jason in the *Medea* of Euripides, where the protagonist claimed 'that he has done Medea a service by bringing her from the land of the barbarians to Greece, where she could learn law and the meaning of justice'³⁴. And in the *Andromache*³⁵, also written by Euripides, a character is made to portray the inferiority of

³¹ Diod. Sic. 3.8.2ff

³² See C.O.G. Ndubokwu, *Some Concepts of the African in Classical Literature*, Ph.D. Thesis (1979), University of Ibadan, p.243.

³³ Aristotle. *Politics*, 1252b.

³⁴ Euripides, *Medea*, 536.

³⁵ Euripides, *Andromache*, 243.

barbarians' law compared to the Greeks'. Diodorus observed that Egyptian monarchs of the last dynasties did not enjoy full powers. According to him, all their acts were regulated by laws and customs for they were usually tried after their deaths, and sometimes denied public burial, if found guilty³⁶. Diodorus then added that Psammeticus I entrusted the sole administration of his empire into the hands of Greek mercenaries who were thought to have possessed better sense of administration.

The Greek writers also held that it was natural and just that a barbarian should obey a Greek just as a slave should obey a freeman. Sophocles buttresses this opinion in the play, *Ajax*, where Agamemnon tells Teucer that he had no right to argue with him because Teucer is a barbarian, and the son of a captive woman³⁷. Although the Greeks recognised Ajax as a hero, they discriminated against him for committing suicide at the beginning of the days of Athenians' exclusiveness. He was regarded as a barbarian although his island of Salamis could be seen from Athens.

Again in terms of socio-cultural distinctiveness, the Greeks were also conscious of the superiority of their own education. According to one of its finest rhetoricians, Isocrates, the Greeks were sages and were more intellectually oriented and academically matured than the barbarians. He noted that this was so because, the Athenian Greeks, while other regions engaged in farming, were busy with the production of the most gifted men in arts and in the powers of rhetoric as well as valour and virtue³⁸. In the same vein, Plato attributed the love of knowledge with the Athenians and love of money to the barbarians; he referred to the Phoenicians and Egyptians as tricksters rather than sages³⁹. Egyptians were said to have had no love for truth for, while they showed talent in every direction, they were nonetheless bent towards material prosperity. Diodorus remarked that the best education someone could attain is that of the Greeks. Thus, he praised Ergamenes, the king of Meroe in ancient Nubia, who received good education in Greek philosophy. Because of this education, Ergamenes did not behave primitively like his cowardly predecessors; rather, he acted like a true Greek. And in the spirit of a true Greek, he abolished the obnoxious tradition and practice, which empowered priests to order the death of their kings whenever they so wished⁴⁰.

As a group with unique distinctions, the Greeks did not believe in intermingling with the barbarians even though they acknowledged that they were a stock that needed acculturation, refinement and enlightening. It was their candid opinion that wars between two Greek states should be humane, while between barbarians (Persians) and the Greeks should be ruthless. It is

³⁶ Diod. Sic. 1.64; 70; 71.

³⁷ Sophocles, *Ajax*, 122ffl.

³⁸ Isocrates, *Areopagiticus*, 74.

³⁹ Plato, *Republica*, 436a

⁴⁰ Diod. Sic. 3.6

therefore not surprising that the barrier between Greeks and barbarians was seen by Demosthenes as being fundamental and necessitated by nature⁴¹. Even Livy reflected this view in the following statement⁴²:

Between all Greeks and those of other race, there is everlasting war and will be, for they are enemies by nature, which is eternal, and not by reason of changeable causes.

As hinted above, Aristotle, in *The Politics*, provided a strong argument for the theory of war and slavery by nature. According to him, by nature, a slave is like a beast, he is 'a living instrument'. A city-state, too, exists 'by nature'. War against the barbarians, therefore, was justified as also 'natural'. In continuation of his thesis, Aristotle explained that 'animals are made by nature for the service of man and may be hunted with impunity; similarly, 'war' – which has an element of hunting in it – may be used against men 'who do not wish to be ruled'. Such a war, according to him, is justified by nature – 'all are equally slaves, that is, animals and the barbarians'. Aristotle then concluded that the Greeks should not be subjected to enslavement, which is the natural lot of the barbarians⁴³.

Among the undignified acts associated with the barbarians by the Greeks was deceit. This was shown by Spartan emissaries while they were dissuading the Athenians from accepting the 'favourable' terms of the Mardonius, the commander of Xerxes, who tried to detach Athens from the combined Greek alliance during the Persian War. They say:

Let no Alexander the Macedonian (the predecessor of Alexander the Great) win you with his smooth-tongued praise of Mardonius' counsel... for you understand that in Barbarians there is no faith or truth.⁴⁴

The barbarians were also said to be lovers of money. This is shown in a statement credited to a young Persian noble, by name Tritantaechmes. On hearing that the prize of Olympic Games was an Olive Crown, this young man remarked that the prize was not commensurate to the efforts expended on the game. Usher, relying on Herodotus, records the Persian's resentment to this in the following address to Mardonius: 'what manner of men, he says, are these you have brought us to fight against, Mardonius, who compete not for money but for honour?'⁴⁵

While the Persian War lasted, the barbarians were seen by the Greeks as greedy and over-ambitious. This was reflected in the remark of Spartan general,

⁴¹ Haarhoff. p.59

⁴² Livy. 31.29.

⁴³ Aristotle. *Politics*, 1260a.

⁴⁴ See Haarhoff. *op.cit.*, p.53

⁴⁵ Stephen Usher. 1969. *The Historians of Greece and Rome*, London, p.11

Pausanias, after his defeat of the Persians at battle of Plataea in 479 B.C. In the camp of the fleeing Persians, Pausanias discovered great quantity of gold, silver and several other fineries. And so while he was having a feast with his army, Pausanias addressed them in the following manner:

Men of Greece, I have called you together for this reason, to show you the folly of the Persian general, who had such luxury, and yet came to deprive us of our meager fare⁴⁶.

As regards social or nobility status, Aristotle held the opinion that the Greek nobility was universally recognised, while that of the barbarian was limited to his country. According to him, like his theory of natural slavery, the Greek nobility was, by nature, absolute and ordained while that of the barbarian was merely relative. So, in order to preserve their nobility from being adulterated by 'the other' influence or cultures which they thought were barbaric, certain measures were taken. Among such measures were the prohibitions of inter-marriages between Greeks and barbarians. To an average Hellene, marriage with the barbarian was more or less a disgraceful concubinage. The children of such marriage could not inherit their parents in any Greek state. Marriage with 'the other' was an act considered calamitous, dishonourable, shameful, and degrading; it was seen as an insult to the 'superior' Greeks. This conventional opinion was clearly shown in the *Medea* of Euripides when the playwright remarked that marriage with a barbarian woman is something dishonourable⁴⁷. Thus, as stated above, Jason in the *Medea* noted 'that he has done Medea a service by bringing her from the land of the barbarians to Greece, where she could learn law and the meaning of justice'. In addition, Diodorus considered certain marital practices as awful and peculiar to the barbarians only. Using the Egyptians as evidence, he observed that the barbarian marriage custom was quite different from the one practiced by the Greeks. He stated that in Egypt, one could find that marriage between direct brother and sister was legally established. This, he perceived to be contrary to nature and to the general custom of mankind.

According to the ancient Greek tradition, the position of women in almost all their city-states was generally low except for the Spartan women. The Greek woman was confined to the home and her life was greatly restricted. This lowly status was considered a great honour if the remark of the Athenian statesman, Pericles, is anything to go by⁴⁸: 'great is your glory if men do not speak about you either in praise or blame'. However, the barbarian women, most especially in Egypt, enjoyed great confidence and consideration. This was due to the custom of marriage which usually required the husbands, at the time of marriage, to give assurance to take care of their wives. It is said, on the

⁴⁶ See Usher, *op. cit.* p.12

⁴⁷ Euripides. *Medea*. 591.

⁴⁸ Thucydides. 2.45.2

testimony of Diodorus, that at the time of the Egyptian marriage ceremony, the husbands used to make a promise of obedience to their wives and entered into agreement not to raise any objection to their commands. Diodorus also linked this system of marriage with a sort of matriarchal engagement that existed around that time in Meroitic Ethiopia. It is, however, important to note that Diodorus, on the overall, conceded a supreme position to Egyptian husband⁴⁹.

Other socio-cultural discriminations leveled against the barbarians were drunkenness, sexual laxity, which had been briefly touched above, and stealing. The Greeks' notion of the average barbarian as a heavy wine-bibber is apparent in Herodotus. According to him, the Egyptian soldiers, especially those of high rank, were even provided with wine during their annual service⁵⁰. Herodotus also referred to the drinking habits of the Egyptians during the feast of Bubastis. According to him, during the feast, people generally drank more wine than they did in the whole year⁵¹. In order to arouse their appetite to drink, Athenaeus wrote that the barbarians (Egyptians) introduced stimulants into their wine. He, however, stated that the people generally drank the amount of wine considered sufficient to promote 'happiness'⁵².

Like other writers, Herodotus expressed great shock at the high incidence of adultery among barbarian families. The barbarian moral laxity was shown in a story which Herodotus told about a blind Egyptian king, who was the son of Sesostris. According to him, the gods promised this king that they would restore his sight if only he could wash his eyes with the urine of a woman who had never been unfaithful to her husband. To accomplish this, the king attempted to use his own wives, his concubines and the women of the town; but all was to no avail until he found solution in a gardener's wife, who might have been a non-Egyptian. It is said that the king later married this woman⁵³. Herodotus also indicated that some barbarian men had sexual intercourse with a dead woman, who was despised and denounced by embalmers⁵⁴. Yet again, Herodotus narrated the story of a barbarian Egyptian king, called Mycerinus, who fell madly in love with his own daughter, and forced her to have sex with him. It is said that this girl was so ashamed of her father's indecent act that she committed suicide. But in view of his other achievements, Herodotus still regarded Mycerinus as a good man, whose sole vice was his uncontrollable sexual indulgence⁵⁵.

As in Greece, Herodotus indicated that prostitution was a socially acceptable and lucrative practice in barbarian lands. To illustrate this, he

⁴⁹ Diod. Sic. 1.80

⁵⁰ Herodotus. 2.168

⁵¹ Herodotus. 2. 30

⁵² Athenaeus. *Deipposophistae*. 1.34.5, 191 ffl.

⁵³ Herodotus. 2.111

⁵⁴ Herodotus. 2. 89

⁵⁵ Herodotus. 2.131

referred to the case of an Egyptian king, Cheops, who even sent his daughter to a brothel in order to procure for him a certain amount of money which he needed. This daughter, after securing for her father the amount of money he needed, also collected precious stones from her lovers, which were used in building a special sepulcher as a monument to immortalize her name⁵⁶. Herodotus also referred to an incidence of sexual intercourse between an Egyptian woman and a goat in the district of Mendes, where the goat was the local sacred animal. Although this practice seemed to be a part of the local religion, it attracted Herodotus' curiosity as a barbaric action⁵⁷. The Roman poet, Pindar (518-438 B.C.) once referred to this act in one of his poems: 'Mendes, along the crag of the sea, furthestmost horn of the Nile, where the...he-goats have sexual intercourse with women'⁵⁸.

The notion of the 'other' as a people prone to stealing could still be retraced to the Herodotus, who indicated that even barbarian nobles used to steal. Again, he relayed the story of an Egyptian king, called Amasis, who, before he came to the throne, not only spent all his time enjoying feasts and jokes, but also took joy in robbing people, especially when he could not get enough money for his accustomed feasting. Each time people laid charge of theft on him, they would drag him before the oracles; some of the oracles would convict him others would not. It is said that when Amasis eventually ascended the throne, he neglected the temples of the gods that had severally acquitted him of the charge of stealing, concluding that those gods were worthless and unreliable. On the other hand, he honoured the gods that had detected and decried his nefarious acts with adornments. He had faith in these latter deities which he considered as truthful⁵⁹. Strabo also wrote about the nefarious acts of barbarians, when he indicated that Egyptian kings took delight in stealing and even gave necessary assistance to the Cilician pirates. Theocritus was to later shed more light on the robbery activities among the Egyptian barbarians by relaying a story about certain notorious Egyptian street rogues, who generally harassed and threatened the lives of passers-by⁶⁰.

In spite of the enormity and gravity of the barbarian inferiority painted above, the Greeks did not consider colour as a primary marker for denoting 'otherness'. Some Greeks demonstrated this not only by accepting the barbarians - especially the Blacks - in their midst, but also by intermarrying with them. According to Herodotus, the Cypriot Greeks traditionally believed that the Ethiopians were among those who composed the elements of their ancient population⁶¹. Although Euripides regarded intermarriage between a Greek and

⁵⁶ Herodotus. 2.126

⁵⁷ Herodotus. 2.45

⁵⁸ Pindar, Fr. 201; cf. Strabo 7, 19.

⁵⁹ Herodotus. 2.173.

⁶⁰ Strabo. 14.5.2; Theocritus. 15.46ff.

⁶¹ See C.O.G. Ndubokwu, *op.cit.* p.269, cf. Herodotus. 7. 90.

barbarian as a calamity, and something dishonourable,⁶² yet there are classical references to formal and informal unions of Greek men with barbarian women, and vice versa⁶³. Aristotle made a reference to certain a Greek woman in Elis, who committed adultery with an Ethiopian man. According to him, the daughter of the woman was not black - characteristic colour of the barbarian - but the son of the daughter was black⁶⁴. By the first century B.C, inter-marriages between Graeco-Roman people and barbarians became common both in Egypt and Asia. By this time, not only did Greek soldiers and mercenaries contract marriages with oriental women, but also Graeco-Roman merchants intermarried with women from Africa and other parts of the classical world. The mixed population of Alexandria is said to have been a result of inter marriages between the natives and the Greeks and Romans. And so, by that period, the word 'Greek' no more possessed the racial purity and distinction it commanded in the fifth century B.C; rather, it signified only a mere cultural differentiation.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have tried to examine how the notion of 'otherness' and 'the other' was conceived in classical antiquity. We have used the ancient Greeks as a template to view how 'superior' individuals, groups and peoples, use certain conjured stereotypes, identities or distinctiveness to construe their impression of and relationship with 'the inferior others'. We have presented briefly the Greeks' general impression of 'the others' who, for several reasons, were termed the *barbarians*. We know that at the very beginning, the early Greeks did not attach contemptuous feelings to the word *barbarians*; rather, they used it for those who could not simply speak Greek language. However, as from the fifth century after the Greeks' victory over the Persians and their barbarian allies, the word acquired more distinctly contemptuous denotation. From the foregoing, it is clear that the Greeks, using several socio-cultural markers, conceived of 'others' - the barbarians - as nothing more than beasts in human form.

⁶² Euripides. *Helena* 224, 295; *Medea* 591.

⁶³ Herodotus. 2.181

⁶⁴ Aristotle. *De Gen. Anim.* 722a.

As in the field of human geography, the Greeks believed that the geographical location and climatic condition of the land of some barbarians probably had adverse effect on them and their behaviours. The conditions made some barbarians, like the Egyptians cited above, to reverse the customs and practices of mankind. Some barbarians were portrayed as wicked, savage and cruel, living like wild beasts. It was also the opinion of the Greeks that many barbarians lacked civilization and education; as such, they all went about nakedly, neither caring about clothing nor decent housing. Likewise, the ancient Greeks thought of the barbarians as morally and sexually lax peoples, who went to the extent of sharing their own wives. It was also their belief that truth could not be found among the barbarians because they were full of deceit. Apart from their perception as slaves by nature and tools to be dragged about, the Greeks believed that barbarians lacked the capability of self-rule or good government. Thus, they usually behaved primitively. As the 'superior' group with certain socio-cultural distinctiveness and identities, the Greeks believed themselves to be sages, more intellectually inclined and more nobly recognized in the known world than the barbarians. As such, not only did they think little of 'the others,' but also regarded them as cultural 'inferiors', who lacked refinement, learning, and artistic or literary culture, something much more pejorative than what the Yoruba, as noted above, would call *ará-oko* (boor, bushman, clodhopper), *aláimoyé* (the one without wisdom or learning), or *èniakénià* (worthless brute).

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