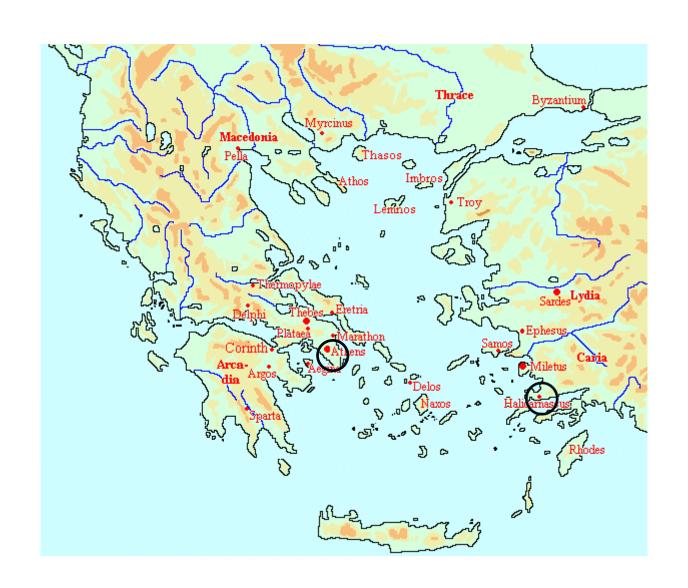
Classical Civilisation 1A Herodotus I: Structure, genre, context

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Herodotus' life

- 5th century, died in the 420s?
- Born in Halicarnassus (Bodrum)
- Moved abroad perhaps in exile because of the tyrant Lygdamis
- Lived some time in Athens



From www.livius.org



Herodotus' life

- 5th century, died in the 420s?
- Born in Halicarnassus (Bodrum)
- Moved abroad perhaps in exile because of the tyrant Lygdamis
- Lived some time in Athens
- Travelled widely
- Took part in the foundation of Thurioi (444/443 BC)
- Wrote the Histories



From https://commons.wikimedia.org



Reading requirement for ClasCiv1A:

Histories books 1, 3, and 4.147 - 9.79
This is all you can be examined on.
But the rest is well worth reading as well!

Please bring the book to the Herodotus lectures.



PURPOSE OF THE HISTORIES



Preface (1.1)

Here are presented the results of the enquiry carried out by Herodotus of Halicarnassus. The purpose is to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time, and to preserve the fame of the important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks; among the matters covered is, in particular, the cause of the hostilities between Greeks and non-Greeks.



- > Purpose:
 - 'to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time'
 - 'to preserve the fame of the important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks'
 - i.e. memorial, 'lest we forget'
- 'In particular, the cause of the hostilities between Greeks and non-Greeks'
 - ➤ Interested in causes (aitiai)
 - Interested in both Greeks and non-Greeks



The *Histories*Table of contents



Book 1

- Introduction
- Croesus of Lydia ('the first to commit crimes against the Greeks', 1.5)
- Cyrus the Great of Persia

Book 2

- Accession of Cambyses of Persia
- History and ethnography of Egypt

Book 3

- Cambyses (incl. conquest of Egypt)
- Death of Cambyses, coup of Darius

Book 4

- History and ethnography of Scythia
- Darius' Scythian campaign
- History and ethnography of Libya
- Darius' Libyan campaign

Book 5

- lonian revolt
- Darius' European campaign



Books 6-9: the Persian Wars

Book 6

- End of Ionian Revolt
- Darius invades Greece = 1st Persian War (490 BC)
 - ➤ Battle of Marathon

Book 7

- Accession of Xerxes
- Xerxes invades Greece = 2nd Persian War (480-479 BC)
 - ➤ Battles of Artemisium and Thermopylae

Book 8

- > The war, incl. Battle of Salamis
- Retreat of Xerxes, leaving Mardonius behind

Book 9

- > The war under Mardonius incl. Battle of Plataea
- Strange ending



Structure of the *Histories*

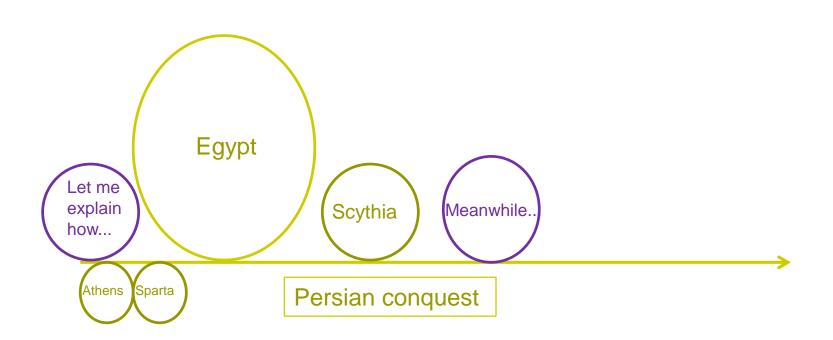


Main structure = chronological, centred on Persia

- 1-5: expansion of Persian empire until 490 BC
- 6-9: Persian campaigns against Greece 490-479 BC

Within this

- Explanatory digressions on history, ethnography, background information
- Reverse chronology to explain causation
- Jumps to simultaneous events elsewhere
- Uses ring-composition to help the reader



Transitional expressions

- 1.7: "Here is how the kingdom passed from the Heraclidae [...] to Croesus' family..."
- 1.15: "I move on now to Ardys, who was Gyges' son"
- 1.19: "Here is an account of an event which happened to take place in the twelfth year of the war..."
- 1.23: "This man [...] was the son of Cypselus and the tyrant of Corinth. Now, the Corinthians say[...] that a really remarkable thing happened during his lifetime..."



Genre: What did Herodotus think he was doing?



■ First historian – did not have a template for what historians do

- Self-proclaimed purpose = memorial
 - > of 'human events'
 - > of fame

- Manifest interest in
 - History/legends
 - Ethnography
 - Marvels (thômata)



- Reports different versions
 - Explicitly chooses between them
 - Explicitly refuses to choose
- 'Enquiry' from
 - Autopsy (Egypt)
 - Grandsons of eyewitnesses
 - Learned men (Priests at Delphi, Persian scribes)
 - Other people he met on his travels?
 - Historical traditions
- based on oral tradition!





- 'Story-teller' narrative structure (cf. epic)
 - Largely chronological with numerous digressions
 - Reverse chronology
 - > Ring-composition
- Type of material
 - Myths
 - > Traditions
- Mode of expression
 - Chatty
 - Conversational
- Composed for oral delivery
 - Audience rather than readers





- Epic/Homeric (traditional)
 - Legendary material
 - □ Structure
 - □ Verbal echoes (e.g. 5.96 'the beginning of evils')
- Hippocratics and Sophists (5th cent. BC)
 - □ Use of evidence
 - Causation
 - □ Transparent, persuasive argument
 - Strong narratorial presence
 - □ Rationalising myths
 - □ Prose
- New: the application of this method to historical material



Context

- Traditional view:
 - □ Remnant of the Archaic age
 - □ Earlier stage than Thucydides
- Contemporary view (since R. Thomas, 2001):
 - □ Second half of 5th century
 - □ Inspired by Hippocratics and Sophists
 - Ionian tradition
 - □ Part of 5th-century intellectual milieu
 - □ Roughly contemporary with Thucydides



Herodotus as historian

- "Father of History" (Cicero)
- "Father of Lies" (Plutarch and Fehling)



Negative

- Legends and anecdotes
- □ Credulity?
- □ Divine intervention
- □ Different interests from modern historians



Positive

- □ Source criticism
- □ Transparent argument
- □ Causation
- □ Open-mindedness
- □ Possible distinction between myths and history
 - Second Preface 1.5-6: 'So this is what the Persians and Phoenicians say. I am not going to come down in favour of this or that account of events, but I will talk about the man who, to my certain knowledge, first undertook criminal acts of aggression against the Greeks'.
 - Doubt about the Greek gods because of Egyptian history (book 2)



Conclusion

- Herodotus' Histories is a complex text
 - □ Read it carefully
 - Enjoy it
 - □ Do not be deceived by its apparent naïvity