Edited by
Rosaria Vignolo Munson

Oxford Readings in Classical Studies

Herodotus: Volume 2

Herodotus and the World

Herodotus: Volume 2

Herodotus and the World

EDITED BY

ROSARIA VIGNOLO MUNSON

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

First Edition published in 2013
Reprinted 2014

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

ISBN 978-0-19-958759-9

OXFORD READINGS IN CLASSICAL STUDIES

The series provides students and scholars with a representative selection of the best and most influential articles on a particular author, work, or subject. No single school or style of approach is privileged: the aim is to offer a broad overview of scholarship, to cover a wide variety of topics, and to illustrate a diversity of critical methods. The collections are particularly valuable for their inclusion of many important essays which are normally difficult to obtain and for the first-ever translations of some of the pieces. Many articles are thoroughly revised and updated by their authors or are provided with addenda taking account of recent work. Each volume includes an authoritative and wide-ranging introduction by the editor surveying the scholarly tradition and considering alternative approaches. This pulls the individual articles together, setting all the pieces included in their historical and cultural contexts and exploring significant connections between them from the perspective of contemporary scholarship. All foreign languages (including Greek and Latin) are translated to make the texts easily accessible to those without detailed linguistic knowledge.

OXFORD READINGS IN CLASSICAL STUDIES

Aeschylus
Edited by Michael Lloyd

Ovid
Edited by Peter E. Knox

The Attic Orators
Edited by Edwin Carawan

Lucretius
Edited by Monica R. Gale

Catullus
Edited by Julia Haig Gaisser

Seneca
Edited by John G. Fitch

Vergil's *Eclogues*
Edited by Katharina Volk

Vergil's *Georgics*
Edited by Katharina Volk

Homer's *Odyssey*
Edited by Lillian E. Doherty

Livy
Edited by Jane D. Chaplin and Christina S. Kraus

Persius and Juvenal
Edited by Maria Plaza

Horace: *Odes* and *Epodes*
Edited by Michèle Lowrie

Horace: *Satires* and *Epistles*
Edited by Kirk Freudenburg

Thucydides
Edited by Jeffrey S. Rusten

Lucan
Edited by Charles Tesoriero, with Frances Muecke and Tamara Neal

Xenophon
Edited by Vivienne J. Gray

The Religious History of the Roman Empire
Pagans, Jews, and Christians
Edited by J. A. North and the late S. R. F. Price

Greek and Roman Historiography
Edited by John Marincola

Tacitus
Edited by Rhiannon Ash

Latin Panegyric
Edited by Roger Rees

All available in paperback

Preface

In the process of conceptualizing a collection of 'must read' scholarship on Herodotus, I have benefited from precious advice. William Turpin, my departmental colleague at Swarthmore, has read drafts of the introductions. Michael Flower, Nino Luraghi, and the anonymous reviewers appointed by OUP have helped me with the selection of the pieces. John Marincola has lent his exceptional editorial expertise in the field of Greek Historiography. The responsibility for remaining errors and omission is of course all mine.

Although I am aware that these volumes are bound to represent an incomplete reflection of the rich modern scholarship on Herodotus, I am nevertheless confident in the value of the articles I have reprinted. I hope that students and readers of Herodotus will find them to be useful guides to different directions in the field and to other studies that could not, but should have been, included. Ultimately this work derives its strength and merits from its contributors, many of whom have revised, modified, translated, or updated their pieces. I am especially grateful to Professor Amélie Kuhrt for providing a precious update to the seminal article on Persian women by her long-time collaborator and friend Heleen Sanchisi Weerdenburg.

I am also grateful to my institution, Swarthmore College, for its generous leave policy, its ideal scholarly atmosphere, and the liberality of its resources.

In the phase of production, I owe a great debt to Miranda Bethell, who copy-edited both volumes with the great intelligence and erudition, and to Helen Hughes, an Oxford-trained classicist and extraordinary proofreader.

I am grateful to David Rudeforth for undertaking the complicated task of authoring the General Indexes, as well as to my Swarthmore student Brad Kim, who has compiled the indexes of Herodotean passages with the speed and precision with which he does everything else.

Professor Stella Miller-Collett has kindly allowed me to use her photograph of the painting from the wall of the Karaburum tomb for the cover of Volume 2.

Jay Kardan has translated most of the articles in French, Italian, and German, and he has edited Walter Burkert's translation of his own piece. Edith Foster has collaborated with Jay Kardan on the translation from the German of the article by Hermann Strasburger.

The production team of Oxford University Press has been very helpful. I especially thank the production editors, who have been successively in charge of this project: Taryn Campbell, Desiree Kellerman, and Kizzy Taylor-Richelieu.

Finally, my warmest thanks certainly go to Hilary O'Shea, the Classics acquisition editor of Oxford University Press for inviting me to undertake this project and for supporting it through different versions with infinite patience and wisdom.

Contents

Introduction 1
1. Ethnography and history 1
2. Approaches and contents of Volume II 4

PHUSIS AND *HISTORIĒ*

1. The boundaries of Earth 21
James S. Romm

2. Herodotus and analogy 44
Aldo Corcella

3. Herodotus and *historia* 78
Catherine Darbo-Peschanski

THE HOMERIC WANDERER

4. Herodotus and Odysseus 109
John Marincola

WOMEN IN HERODOTUS

5. Exit Atossa: Images of women in Greek historiography on Persia 135
Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg
Addendum 148
Amélie Kuhrt

6. Women and culture in Herodotus' *Histories* 151
Carolyn Dewald

WORLD RELIGIONS AND THE DIVINE

7. Herodotus and religion 183
John Gould

8. Herodotus on the names of the gods: Polytheism as a historical problem 198
Walter Burkert

HERODOTUS' *BARBAROI*

9. Women's customs among the 'savages' in Herodotus 213
Michèle Rosellini and Suzanne Saïd

10. Imaginary Scythians: Space and nomadism 245
François Hartog

11. Herodotus the tourist 267
James Redfield

12. Herodotus and an Egyptian mirage: The genealogies of the Theban priests 292
Ian S. Moyer

13. Who are Herodotus' Persians? 321
Rosaria Vignolo Munson

US AND THEM

14. Ethnicity, genealogy, and Hellenism in Herodotus 339
Rosalind Thomas

15. East is East and West is West—Or are they? National stereotypes in Herodotus 360
Christopher Pelling

Acknowledgements 381
Bibliography 383
Index of Passages from Herodotus 'Histories' 449
General Index 459

Introduction

1. ETHNOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

1.1

In Henry Immerwahr's formulation, Herodotus 'first discovered history as a method of understanding the world as a whole'.[1] This is not another way of saying that Herodotus' subject matter is hard to describe (see I Intr. §1.2), but rather that he frames the flow of human events within the broader and more stable physical setting of the knowable earth and the cultural groupings of the people who inhabit it. It is commonplace to observe that the geographic and ethnographic descriptions which Herodotus inserts between the historiographic *logoi*—usually when a foreign people becomes the target of Persian aggressive action[2]—are not always immediately functional in all their parts for furthering our understanding of the course of events in the surrounding narrative. They also represent a different genre of prose writing, one that often uses the ethnographic present tense rather than the past tenses found in the narrative of events. In the economy of the *Histories* as a whole, however, the ethnographic and geographic passages are from the ideological viewpoint deeply consistent with the historical narrative; they reveal the same sets of tensions between difference and similarity, and, at the epistemological level, a striving for accuracy mixed with the ever-present uncertainty of human knowledge.[3]

[1] Immerwahr (1966) 5.

[2] See **de Jong (1999)** I Chapter 9, 271.

[3] For the tendency to separate Herodotus' ethnographic *logoi* from his historiographical project, see Vol. I Intr. §1.5.

1.2

We know that earlier Greek writers often mixed ethnographic description with historiography, whether a historical component was subordinated to ethnography, as with Herodotus' dynastic narrative about Egyptian kings in Book 2, or in some other way.[4] But Herodotus has integrated ethnography into history to deepen its political meaning. The message he has to deliver is complex and relies on *historiē* (autopsy, hearsay, and interpretation; see I Intr. §§3.2.2–3, 3.4.1) both in time and in space. Like his Solon, who appears in Book 1 at Croesus' court, Herodotus implicitly claims a *sophiē* that is based on travel.[5] However, Herodotus' *historiē* is something different from Solon's *planē* (wandering) and *theōriē* (sightseeing) and is grounded in Ionian natural philosophy rather than in 'Solonian' political moralism. Solon's paradigms, moreover, are mainly Greek,[6] whereas Herodotus urges his contemporaries to look outward, to refine their knowledge of barbarian peoples in order to recognize the significance of culture (*nomos*, in the singular collective sense) and the extent to which different customs determine human action.[7] Also, unlike Solon Herodotus engages in a typically fifth-century discourse that sophists and medical writers of his time also pursued on the subjects of nature, culture, and the divine. Like Herodotus and his Ionian predecessors, many of these modern thinkers were Greeks of Asia and experienced travellers. Thus, a variety of archaic and classical intellectual trends come together in Herodotus and contribute to his synchronic description of the world.[8] This breadth of vision in turn cooperates with the diachronic range by which Herodotus allows his audiences to compare the past and the present for the purpose of understanding the broader movements of history.

[4] Cf. I Intr. §3.2.2, and see Fornara (1983) 12–14; cf. **Fowler (1996)** I Chapter 2, and Drews (1973) on known authors of *Lydiaka*, *Persika*, *Babylonika*, etc.

[5] For the tradition of pre-philosophical *sophia* based on travel, see Szegedy-Maszak (1978); Kurke (2011) 112–15.

[6] 1.29–32. See, however, Solon's adoption of an Egyptian law at 2.177.2. On the identification of Solon and Herodotus as travellers, see **Redfield (1985)** II Chapter 11, 268.

[7] See 'Ethnography as Access to History' in Lateiner (1989) 144–62.

[8] On Herodotus' familiarity with the intellectual trends of his time, especially the Hippocratic writers and sophists, see the important book by Thomas (2000), partially anticipated by Lateiner (1986) for the medical writers. Winton (2000); Raaflaub (2002); see also **Fowler (1996)** I Chapter 2. Interestingly enough, Herodotus calls Solon a *sophistēs* (1.29); on the early use of this term, see Thomas (2000) 158, 283.

1.3

With a few important exceptions, Herodotus' anthropological principles do not emerge from general statements, but from his painstaking accumulation of specific evidence.[9] These concrete particulars both serve to characterize foreign peoples and communicate their meaning cross-culturally, through the relations they establish at short and long range with each other or with the narrative of past events. In his Babylonian *logos*, for example, Herodotus presents us with the image of hard-working Armenian merchants who transport their wares down the Euphrates on round boats made of pieces of leather stretched on frames of willow reeds. With their donkeys on board, they sail to Babylon, where they dismantle the boats, sell their cargo and the reeds, and then make their way back up to Armenia by land having loaded on the donkeys the leather skins they will recycle to make new boats (1.194). This is one of many passages in the ethnography that points to Assyrian resourcefulness, but it also alerts us to the metaphorical value of much of the *Histories*.[10] In a book that explains the common roots of distinct archaic and classical genres, Gregory Nagy has argued that Herodotus' *historiē*, though primarily scientific and juridical, also participates in the allusive and implicit mode of the *ainos*, a traditional form of discourse represented by the fables of Aesop as well as by the poetry of Hesiod, Archilochus, Theognis, and Pindar.[11] The model of the *ainos* fits this and many other ethnographic passages in Herodotus: for those who understand, the Armenian boats interact with the broader context of a historical narrative where kings regularly bridge, channel, and divide up rivers (including Cyrus in the Babylonian *logos* itself), and generally mark or violate natural features in their drive to conquer (see I Intr. §3.4.4). Here regular folks make a living thanks to the river, but do not even attempt to defy it by sailing upstream. The 'wonder' of the boats exemplifies Herodotus' constant contraposition between the outsized, destabilizing, and frequently 'unjust' and dangerous actions of rulers on the one hand and the ordinary life of communities, who make the best of their surroundings, on the other. One of the functions of the unbiased observation of foreign customs is precisely to reveal collective practices

[9] Exceptions include especially 3.38.4 and 2.3.

[10] On the metaphorical dimension of the *Histories*, see Dewald (1993), on 'talking' objects; Munson (2001b) 232–65, on 'wonders' (*thōmata*); Hollmann (2011), on different orders of signs. See also Irwin (2007) on the political symbolism of the Paeonian and Thracian *logoi* in Book 5.

[11] See Nagy (1990) 332–35.

that are both exotic (i.e. different from those of the Greeks) and profoundly 'normal'—that is, respectful of the natural order and divine *moira*.

2. APPROACHES AND CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

2.1 *Phusis* and *Historiē*

2.1.1 For Herodotus the order of nature is first of all reflected in geography and the way in which the world is parcelled out into various inhabited territories by rivers, seas, mountain ranges, and deserts. The views of ancient poets and natural philosophers on the external shape of the earth are surveyed in Chapter 1 by **Romm (1992)**, who also explains how Herodotus positions himself against the conventional wisdom that is based on a mixture of myth and science. Herodotus rejects, among other things, the old Ionian world map where the earth is a disk surrounded by a body of water called Ocean, and he rather finds that if one travels as far as possible to the edges of the inhabited world, one reaches desert, empty territories. These *erēmoi* block access to autopsy and hearsay so that there is no way to find out if more people, or a body of water, or anything else lies on the other side. For Herodotus, in other words, geographical margins embody an epistemological issue: they mark the point where empirical observation stops and knowledge finds its limits much as, if the inquirer goes far back in time, he is likely to reach the unverifiable area of myth.

2.2

2.2.1 In the realm of geographical information, in contrast to history, *opsis* is the privileged instrument of inquiry and *akoē* comes second (see 2.99.1). In Chapter 2, however, **Corcella (1984)** is especially interested in the extent to which Herodotus' empiricism relies on the exercise of *gnōmē* (reasoning, judgement, interpretation) to supplement or even replace incomplete visual or oral information.[12] In spite of his polemic against the excessively symmetrical reconstructions of his Ionian predecessors, Herodotus' *gnōmē* also creates its own symmetries. Reasoning

[12] On the components of *historiē*, see I Intr. §3.2.2 and n. 43.

by analogy, the researcher forms an opinion about the invisible based on the information provided by the visible as when, to take the most famous example, he reconstructs the obscure origin of the Nile on the basis of the known course of the Ister.[13] But, as Corcella shows, Herodotus brings analogy to bear also on entirely visible phenomena, whether they are geographical features of different lands or the customs of the peoples who inhabit them. In the synchronic and even rather static reality he describes, the experience of endless differentiation is countered by the search for rules, correspondences, and similarities: Scythia borders on the sea, just like Attica, the core of the Egyptian lotus resembles poppy seed, this custom is similar to that, and so on. Synchronic reality turns out to be patterned. This is deeply consistent with the patterning Immerwahr and others have emphasized especially in Herodotus' view of the historical past (see I Intr. §§3.4.2–3).

2.2.2 From a more philosophical standpoint, **Darbo-Peschanski (2007)**, in Chapter 3, arrives at similar conclusions with regard to the coherence of Herodotus' universe. Her argument implies that there are no sharp distinctions in Herodotus between different spheres of the real. The multifarious phenomena Herodotus describes involve as many natures (*phuseis*) that coexist and check one another. All fall under the rubric of *phusis* writ large, which is in turn ruled by justice (*dikē*). This is a principle of divine inspiration that controls both the whole and the parts, including geographical entities, animal species, societies characterized by their peculiar customs, individual human beings acting in history—and even the *logoi* that represent all these things and are subject to the judgement of *histōr* and audience (see I Intr. §3.2.3). According to such interpretation, Herodotus' view of the world as governed by a rational and moral force is globally optimistic: reality is as it should be. In the short range, however, it adds urgency to the warning of imminent danger, which he communicates through the *Histories* to over-reaching individuals and states (see I Intr. §3.6.4).

2.3 The Homeric wanderer

2.3.1 For Herodotus poetic invention cannot, any more than scientific schematism, legitimately replace *historiē*. In the sphere of the exploration of foreign lands, however, as in that of the narrative of 'great

[13] On this, see **Hartog (1979)** II Chapter 10, 248–9, where the analogy between Nile and Ister becomes the basis for a *polarity* between Egypt and Scythia.

deeds', his purposes and narrative mode largely derive from the tradition of epic. The *Histories* certainly contain intertextual references to many other poetic genres (see I §3.2.2 and notes), but the relationship of the Herodotus-narrator to Homer is uniquely self-conscious and personal. As he introduces himself to his readers, he defines his work by analogy and opposition to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The declaration 'this is the performance of the research (*historiē*) of Herodotus of Halicarnassus' in the first sentence of the work signifies, among other things, 'I am not Homer and my knowledge does not rely on the Muse'. At the same time, the declared purpose of preventing remarkable achievements from becoming 'unglorious' and the inquiry on who is responsible for the outset of an enmity both signal a tacit competition with the *Iliad*. At first indeed the narrator appears to yield to the Homeric impulse of going back to the Trojan War; he then rejects his Iliadic beginning, but promptly compensates for the self-correction with another Homeric manoeuvre, when he announces that he will travel to 'the cities of men' (1.5.3; cf. *Od.* 1.4). Herodotus is well aware that the first ancestor of Greek travelling thinkers like himself (see §1.2) is the wandering Odysseus.

2.3.2 In Chapter 4 **Marincola (2007)** traces the origin of ancient ethnography to epic poetry and shows the profound influence of the figure of Odysseus as a pervasive alter ego of the ancient historian. Marincola's discussion of Herodotus complements the analysis by de **Jong (1999)** of the Homeric (mostly Iliadic) narrative features of the *Histories* (see I Chapter 9 and Intr. §3.5.3), but also cuts more profoundly into the issue of the truth-value of the text. According to Marincola, if we recognize Herodotus' Odyssean persona, we may be better equipped to accept the presence of a fictional component in the *Histories* and to interpret them as a work that intends to communicate not the literal truth as Herodotus physically saw it but rather, like Odysseus' lies in Ithaca, a higher sort of truth. This would explain why the most 'biographical' sections, where Herodotus appears as the explorer-protagonist, as in Book 2, also combine his most unbelievable claims to accuracy with inexplicable factual errors. Thus Marincola's exploration of Herodotus' poetic antecedents leads almost in the opposite direction to the survey of contemporary prose writers by **Fowler (1996)** (see I Chapter 2). By connecting with a broader scholarly discussion about the extent to which ancient notions of truthfulness and fiction differ from our own,[14] Marincola moves rather close to the position of Fehling (see I §3.2.4).

[14] See the volume edited by Gill and Wiseman (1993), esp. Chapter 3 by J. Moles on Herodotus and Thucydides. Flory (1987).

2.4 Women in Herodotus

2.4.1 Besides representing foreign peoples and lands, Herodotus' work (as opposed to, for example, Thucydides' history) also shares with the *Odyssey* a strong interest in the actions and opinions of women. In the ethnographic sections the customs that regulate the life of women receive a great deal of attention. In the historical narrative women appear as characters on the receiving end of men's behaviour, but they also frequently take initiatives, fight, kill, save lives, and dispense advice. We cannot, of course, trust that this information gives us a more accurate portrayal of the women of antiquity than the one we derive from other literary sources. The prominent women of Greek tragedy, for example, are mythical characters shaped by dramatic convention and the perception of male authors (not to mention by the performance of male actors), who were more or less influenced by their experience of contemporary reality or by literary models. So also in the sphere of *historiē*, the collective sources Herodotus mentions always reflect the male viewpoint. With the important exception of three priestesses of Dodona (2.55.3; cf. 2.53.3), the few named individuals to whom he says he spoke are male. It is not at all clear how much access to female informants the researcher would have had or sought. The gender segregation of classical Greece has ensured that we seldom directly hear the voice of women.

The women in the *Histories*, moreover, are for the most part foreigners. In fact, women play a prominent role precisely because Herodotus broadens his focus beyond the Greek world. In the foreign cultures he studies women behaved more aggressively—or so the Greeks believed—and had more influence in public affairs, or even sometimes held the absolute rule. The imaginary of fifth-century Greeks constructed the East especially as the place where the subversion of (Greek) normalcy manifested itself metaphorically with 'women becoming men, and men women'.[15] These ideological constraints make objective historical inquiry somewhat problematic.

2.4.2 The first article in this part of Volume II is designed to remind us that it is helpful for the modern readers of Herodotus to consult specialists who study the cultures he describes. In Chapter 5, **Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983)** and the complementary update written for this collection by **Amélie Kuhrt** give the perspective of two leading scholars who have been instrumental in forwarding Achaemenid studies since

[15] See e.g. the words of Xerxes at 8.88.3, but examples of this sort are numerous.

the 1980s. The problem of what we know about Persian women is part of a much larger issue that historians of ancient Persia confront in practically every area of their investigation: the only Iranian or Near Eastern evidence available is archaeological and epigraphical, while the more eloquent literary sources are exclusively Greek. The traditional Greek view, dramatically influenced by a Greek experience of the Persian Wars and their outcome, is that in the reign of Xerxes the Persian Empire was in decline and that this decline was largely due to the excesses of a luxurious and effeminate culture, of which the actions and behaviour of women were both a symptom and a contributing cause. As Sancisi-Weerdenburg explains, this view made its way into many modern history books especially under the influence of ideologically invested scholarship on Persia in the first half of the twentieth century. Its larger claim about decadence is, however, demonstrably false, and the corollary about the influence and ethos of Persian women is not corroborated by the evidence of Achemaenian inscriptions and art. According to Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Herodotus is better informed and more honest than most other Greek sources, although the same prejudice also emerges from some of his narratives. As she shows, however, (and here her approach is close to that described in I Intr. §3.3.1), Herodotus processes genuine Persian traditions which, when properly analysed, can lead us a bit closer to fact.

2.4.3 Although regarded as improbable by historians, from a literary point of view the connection between individual Persian women and the performance of the Persian kings is a meaningful pattern that extends beyond the representation of Persia. Throughout the *Histories*, Herodotus shows the interface of the private and the public by representing women in general as a measure or foil for male power. The Constitutional Debate, for example, puts the two together by theorizing that the abuse of women is a feature typical of the behaviour of tyrants. Here and elsewhere, Herodotus treats both kingship and the position and role of women as cross-cultural categories with a symbolic import. If the king-figure serves to magnify the dangers of different degrees and kinds of leadership within a community, women often metonymically represent the community itself. They are the victims of the leaders' abuses (abducted women in the Proem, Megacles' daughter, Babylonian women), a conservative force that resists their disruptive activities (Candaules' wife) or, less frequently, the emulators of their self-aggrandizing schemes (Pheretime).

2.4.4 In Chapter 6, **Dewald (1981)** surveys different types of women in the *Histories*—both passive and active, as individual characters or col-