



The Performance of History

HPAH5027/6027 – HERODOTUS AND HIS HISTORIES

Focus on orality

- ▶ Oral performances fairly common in 5th cent BCE Greek world
 - ▶ Festivals
 - ▶ Plays
 - ▶ *Epideixis/epidexis*
- ▶ Literacy and reading aloud
 - ▶ General consensus is that Hdt performed his work publicly (Thomas 2000: 249-269; for opposing view, see Johnson 1994)

What came first, writing or performance?

- ▶ Debate over whether Hdt performed a final draft or work-in-progress
 - ▶ Looking for audience input/reaction? Baragwanath 2008: 22-26.
- ▶ *Logoi* as individual performances
 - ▶ *Histories* narrative as a series of performances?
 - ▶ Or as a flowing narrative?
 - ▶ Middle ground – Hdt collected *logoi* together in later life
 - ▶ Cf. Evans 2011: 1-16 for a summary

Exercise

- ▶ Get in groups of 3-4 people
- ▶ Based on your reading of Hdt and your notes, pick out 2 passages that you think would be effective as a 'performance'
- ▶ One (or more) of you will read the passage to the rest of the class
- ▶ We will then consider:
 - ▶ Why have you chosen that passage?
 - ▶ Who (if anyone) was the intended audience?
 - ▶ What context do you need to make sense of the passage?
 - ▶ What kind of content makes for good audience participation?

Further reading

- ▶ Baragwanath, E. 2008, *Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 22-34.
- ▶ Evans, S. 2008, 'The Recitation of Herodotus'. In Pigoân, J. (ed.), *The Children of Herodotus: Greek and Roman Historiography and Related Genres*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 1-16.
- ▶ Johnson, W.A. 1994, 'Oral Performance and the Composition of Herodotus' *Histories*'. *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 229-254. Available here: <https://grbs.library.duke.edu/issue/view/751>.
- ▶ Thomas, R. 2000, *Herodotus in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 249-269.