



Thermopylae and Traditions

HPAH5027/6027 – HERODOTUS AND HIS HISTORIES

Aims

- ▶ Presentation - scholarly reactions to 300 (Harry C and Jordan).
- ▶ Review Hdt's presentation of Thermopylae and compare to other sources.
- ▶ Discuss broader reception of Herodotus in antiquity



Herodotus in Antiquity

Herodotus in Antiquity

For	Against
Dionysius of Halicarnassus Cicero? Pausanias (?)	Thucydides (?) Ctesias Aristotle Plutarch Josephus Lucian Aulus Gellius

Hdt and Thucydides

- ▶ Thuc. 1.20:

- ▶ [1] 'The way that most men deal with traditions, even traditions of their own country, is to receive them all alike as they are delivered, without applying any critical test whatever...[3] There are many other unfounded ideas current among the rest of the Hellenes, even on matters of contemporary history which have not been obscured by time. For instance, there is the notion that the Lacedaemonian kings have two votes each, the fact being that they have only one; and that there is a company of Pitane, there being simply no such thing. So little pains do men take in the investigation of truth, accepting readily the first story that comes to hand.

Hdt and Ctesias

- ▶ Photius, *Library*, T8:
 - ▶ '[Ctesias] gives a detailed account of Persian history and in books seven, eight, ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen he describes the history of Cyrus, Cambyses, and the Magus, and Darius and Xerxes – and this is different from the *Histories* of Herodotus in almost every way and he exposes Herodotus as a liar in a number of matters and calls him a writer of fables: he is later than Herodotus. He says that he was an eyewitness of most of the things he recounts or that, when it was not possible for him to see, he made sure that he personally heard accounts from the Persians themselves and that this is how he wrote his history.'

Hdt and Plutarch

- ▶ Plut., *De Herod.*, 1:

- ▶ 'The style, O Alexander, of Herodotus, as being simple, free, and easily suiting itself to its subject, has deceived many; but more, a persuasion of his dispositions being equally sincere. For it is not only (as Plato says) an extreme injustice, to make a show of being just when one is not so; but it is also the highest malignity, to pretend to simplicity and mildness and be in the mean time really most malicious. Now since he principally exerts his malice against the Boeotians and Corinthians, though without sparing any other, I think myself obliged to defend our ancestors and the truth against this part of his writings, since those who would detect all his other lies and fictions would have need of many books.'

Overview

► Why the negativity?

- Oral history project, Dr Rob Perks, British Library:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6esaSkfIQXs>

Exercise

- ▶ In pairs or on your own, construct a timeline of events which describes the last 10 years of your life:
- ▶ To consider:
 - ▶ What major events stand out?
 - ▶ How do you record time in personal history?
 - ▶ What resources would you use to help you?
 - ▶ What questions would you ask to get information?

Further reading

- ▶ Foster, E.M. and Lateiner, D. (eds.) 2012, *Thucydides and Herodotus*. Oxford: OUP.
- ▶ Hornblower, S. 2006, 'Herodotus' influence in Antiquity'. Chapter in Dewald and Marincola (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*,
- ▶ Llewellyn-Jones, L. and Robson, J. 2010, *Ctesias' History of Persia: Tales of the Orient*. Entire book available from academia.edu.
- ▶ Priestley, J. 2014, *Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture: Literary Studies in the Reception of Herodotus*. Oxford: OUP.