

7 HERODOTUS : The HISTORIES

His work consists of 9 books in 2 sections:

- Part 1 The Rise of the Persian Empire Books 1-5:27
 Part 2 Greece and the Persian Wars Books 5:28-9

Book 1

Prologue: various explanations of quarrel between Persians + Greeks (1-5)
 Rise and fall of Lydia (6-94)
 Cyrus and the Persian Empire (95-216)

Book 2

Egypt: geography (1-34)
 manners + customs (35-98)
 history (99-182)

Book 3

Persian conquest of Egypt 525 BC (1-38)
 Digression on Samos (39-61)
 Revolt of the Magi: Darius becomes king of Persia 521 BC (62-149)
 Revolt + capture of Babylon 519 BC (150-160)

Book 4

Scythia: history, geography, customs (1-82)
 Persian expedition to Scythia 512 BC (83-144)
 Persian conquest of Libya (145-205)

Book 5

Persian campaigns in Europe (1-27)
 The Ionian Revolt 499 BC (28-126)

Book 6

Failure of the Ionian Revolt 494 BC (1-42)
 Persian campaigns in Thrace + Macedonia 492 BC (43-50)
 Cleomenes of Sparta (51-93)
 Persian expedition to Greece: Battle of Marathon 490 BC (94-131)
 The Fate of Miltiades 489 BC (132-140)

Book 7

Xerxes becomes Persian king + prepares invasion of Greece (1-137)
 Greek preparations to resist the Persians (138-174)
 Movements of Persian + Greek fleets near Artemisium (175-195)
 Battle of Thermopylae 480 BC (196-239)

Book 8

Battle of Artemisium 480 BC (1-26)
 Movements of Greeks + Persians after Thermopylae/Artemisium (27-55)
 Battle of Salamis 480 BC (56-96)
 Retreat of Xerxes + Persian preparations for land campaign (97-144)

Book 9

Preparations for a land battle (1-19)
 Battle of Plataea 479 BC (20-70)
 Aftermath of Plataea (71-89)
 Battle of Mycale 479 BC (90-106)
 Aftermath of the Persian invasions (107-122)

8 HERODOTUS' LIFE and BACKGROUNDEVIDENCEHis own Book

He refers to himself and his travels on several occasions
 At 1:1 he describes himself as 'Herodotus of Halicarnassus'
 He makes no personal statements about events of the Persian Wars
 his whole account seems to be derived at second-hand
 He refers to 4 events which occurred 430-431 in 1st year of Peloponnesian War
 most well-known is Theban attack on Plataea (7:233) (521)
 He seems to have been greatly influenced by Athens
 he seems to know the topography of the city
 8:52-5 (540-1) describes the ascent to the Acropolis
 3:119 (252) parallels Sophocles Antigone 905ff
 (with parents dead no possibility of getting another brother)
 he is anxious to defend the Alcmaeonid family from treachery (6:123ff) (431)
 he says democracy was the reason for the vigour of Athens (5:78) (369)

Suidas

This is a Greek encyclopaedia compiled at Byzantium in the 10th century AD
 it contains many items of a much earlier date
 it has entries under Herodotus and Panyassis (relative of Herodotus)
 it gives information about Herodotus' life and family

HALICARNASSUS

A city on the coast of SW Asia Minor
 Its pre-Greek inhabitants were Carians (native Asians)
 Dorian Greek immigrants subdued the Carians in 9th century BC
 they intermarried with the Carians
 Herodotus' father had a Carian name Lyxes (Suidas)
 -so Herodotus was not a pure Greek
 The city gradually came under Ionian influence
 Miletus + Ephesus (important Ionian cities) lay to the N
 by 5th century BC Ionic dialect was used in the city
 (Ionic inscriptions survive)
 Artemisia was Queen of the city at the time of the Persian Invasion 480 BC
 7:99 (474) mentions her command of 5 ships (husband had died)
 8:87-8 (552-3) describes her actions at Salamis
 8:68 gives her advice to Xerxes before battle of Salamis (545-6)
 Suidas tells us:
 civil war broke out in reign of her grandson Lygdamis
 Panyassis (uncle of Herodotus + epic poet) was killed by Lygdamis
 Herodotus took refuge in Samos
 he later returned and helped to expel Lygdamis
 By 454 BC the city was member of the Delian League in alliance with Athens
 it appears on the tribute list of 454/453 BC

Herodotus was probably born about 484 BC
 His interest in Halicarnassus is shown by:
 his references to Artemisia
 other references to Halicarnassus (1:144, 2:178)
 As a boy he talked to men who sailed on 480 BC campaign
 He was brought up in the Persian empire
 He was probably half Greek/Asian
 The city was Dorian but under Ionian influence
 so he was influenced by both strands of Greek life

SAMOS

Island off W coast of Asia Minor

Colonised by Ionians in 11th century BC

It became a leading commercial centre of the Greek world
especially under the tyrant Polycrates (535-522 BC)

It was conquered by the Persians after the death of Polycrates

It remained under Persian domination until Battle of Mycale 479 BC

It then regained its independence and joined the Delian League

it was a major ship-contributing member

Herodotus shows considerable interest in Samos:

he has a long digression on the tyrant Polycrates (3:39-61) (220-229)

he says Samos has 3 greatest building feats in Greek world (3:61)(228-9)

he mentions a column commemorating Battle of Lade (494 BC)

'The column still stands in the public square' (6:14) (393)

Herodotus probably came here as a young man

after the civil war in Halicarnassus

Suidas wrongly says he learnt Ionic dialect here

(Ionic dialect was already being used at Halicarnassus)

His interest in Samos is shown by his references to the island

As young man he lived in this Delian League state

so he could view the Persian empire from outside

He came under strong Ionian influence in this Ionian centre

Ionian attitude of scientific enquiry

Ionian international spirit

the Ionian geographer Hecataeus of Miletus

the Ionian background of Homer

HERODOTUS' TRAVELSNorth AegeanChalcidice

'The road which the Great King took remains untouched to this day. The Thracians never plough it up or sow crops on it.' (7:115)

Thasos

'The island's revenue was derived partly from mines. I have seen these mines myself.' (6:47)

Byzantium

'Here seated in the temple Darius looked out over the Black Sea - a sight indeed worth seeing.' (4:86-7)

Black Sea AreaW Coast(Scythia)

'The Borysthenes is, in my opinion, the most valuable and productive river anywhere, with the sole exception of the Nile.' (4:53)

S Coast(Colchis)

'I asked some questions both in Colchis and in Egypt.' (2:104)

Asia MinorTroy

'I formed the opinion that the whole region above Memphis(Egypt) resembles the country around Troy.' (2:10)

Further EastBabylon

'The Temple of Bel was still in existence in my time; all its 8 towers can be climbed by a spiral way running round the outside and about half-way up there are seats for those who make the ascent to rest on.' (1:181)

Palestine

'Most of the memorial pillars which King Sesostris erected in the conquered countries have disappeared, but I have seen some myself in Palestine.' (2:107)

Tyre

'To get the best information I possibly could I made a voyage to Tyre in Phoenicia.' (2:44)

Gaza

'Gaza, a town I should say not much smaller than Sardis.' (3:5)

Egypt

'As far as Elephantine (Aswan) I speak as an eye-witness, but further south from hearsay.' (2:29)

(Elephantine is about 500 miles down the Nile)

Pyramid of
Cheops
Pyramid of
Chephren

'An inscription is cut on it. I remember distinctly that the interpreter who read me the inscription said' (2:124)
'It is of smaller size than that of Cheops. I measured both of them myself.' (2:127)

Greece
Delphi

'Cyges sent a number of presents to the shrine at Delphi. These bowls stand in the Corinthian treasury.' (1:14)
'Allyattes sent to Delphito inquire of the god about his health. The priestess of Apollo refused to give an answer I know this at first hand, for I heard it from some Delphians.' (1:20)
'Croesus caused the image of a lion to be made of refined gold. When the temple of Delphi was burnt down this statue fell from the gold bricks which formed its base and lies today in the Corinthian treasury. It lost about 200 pounds weight in the fire, and now weighs only 370 pounds.' (1:51)
'The rocks which fell from Parnassus were still there in my time, they lay in the enclosure round the shrine of Pronaea, where they embedded themselves after crashing through the Persian troops.' (5:39)

Through his travels Herodotus had first-hand knowledge of many of the places he describes and had met many people with memories of the Persian Wars

ATHENSKnowledge of Athens/Attica

Herodotus shows a detailed knowledge of W end of the Acropolis at Athens (8:53)
Chains of Boeotians + Chalcidians taken prisoner in 506 BC were hung in Acropolis

'They were still hanging there in my day, on the walls the Persian fire had scorched, opposite the shrine which faces westward. It is the first thing you see on the left as you pass through the Propylaea.' (5:76)

He refers to a consecrated piece of ground:

'still to be seen by the market-place in Athens.' (5:89)

He refers to the appearance of Cape Sunium as you sail round it (4:89)

References which suggest Athenian Readers

He describes the circuit of the outer wall of the Median city Ecbatana:

'as much the same in extent as at Athens.' (1:98)

He compares the capacity of a Persian dry measure with an Attic one (1:192)

He compares the distance from Heliopolis (Egypt) to the sea with that from Athens to Pisa (Olympia) (2:7)

He compares the geographical setting of Scythia with that of Attica

'bounded on two sides by two different seas' (4:99)

but descriptions of Solon (1:29, 2:177) suggest non-Athenian readers as well

Interest in the Alcmaeonid Family

He describes the relationship between tyrant Pisistratus and Alcmaeonidae (1:61)
He describes how the Alcmaeonidae gained influence at Delphi (5:61)

they bribed the priestess to tell Sparta to liberate Athens from tyranny

He notes that Cleisthenes the democratic reformer was an Alcmaeonid (5:66)

He explains the curse on the Alcmaeonid Family (5:71)

He seeks to clear the Alcmaeonidae of charge of supporting Persians (6:123)

he says the story of their flashing a shield at Marathon is incredible
he says they hated absolute government and were in exile during tyranny

but an archon-list shows Cleisthenes was archon under tyrant Hippias

He gives the history of the Alcmaeonid Family (6:124-132)

he traces the descent of Pericles

Knowledge of Sophocles

- At 3:119 there is a close verbal similarity to Sophocles Antigone 904-920
on the comparative value of a husband and a brother
- At 1:32 there is a close similarity with Oedipus the King 1529-1530
no man should be called happy until he is dead
- Sophocles wrote an ode in honour of Herodotus
a considerable fragment of this remains

Praise of Athens

Herodotus praised Athens:

for her democracy (5:78) (369)

for the bravery of the Athenians at Battle of Marathon (6:112) (429)

for her performance in the Salamis campaign (7:139) (487)

He describes her love of freedom in rejecting Persian terms 479 BC (8:144)(574-5)

Herodotus clearly spent a considerable time in Athens

He was impressed with the spirit of Athenian democracy

He was greatly influenced by Athenian tragedy

he accepted the view that great prosperity arouses the anger
of the gods - seen in the downfall of Croesus

he also believed that arrogance is punished by retribution -
this is seen in the downfall of Xerxes

He was able to meet men who had fought in the Persian Wars
(but not the leading generals who were all dead)

He gained some information from the Alcmaeonid Family
some of this was biased against their rival Themistocles

He possibly left Athens because of 451 citizenship law
this restricted citizenship to those with both parents citizens
it probably made a grant to a foreigner less likely

THURII

This was a Pan-Hellenic colony founded by Athens under Pericles 443 BC

Many writers (including Aristotle) refer to Herodotus as 'the Thurian'

Suidas says that he took part in the colonisation of Thurii

Thurii was in Lucania in S Italy

Tradition says there was a tomb to him in the market-place there

His work contains some references to cities in Italy and events in the W

Herodotus may have returned to Athens towards end of his life

He refers to 4 events in 431/430 BC (in Peloponnesian War)

He may have left Athens because of the Great Plague
and returned to die at Thurii

A Possible BIOGRAPHY of Herodotus

484 born at Halicarnassus

as a boy listens to men who had sailed under Artemisia in 480 BC

c464 failure of uprising against Lygdamis (grandson of Artemisia)
his uncle Panyassis is killed
he escapes to Samos

? he travels to the Black Sea area

before 454 he takes part in liberating Halicarnassus from Lygdamis' tyranny
it becomes a tributary member of the Delian League

after 454 he travels to Egypt, Palestine, Babylon

c450 he takes up residence at Athens
he gives public readings of his work at Athens and Olympia
he cannot secure a grant of citizenship because of 451 law

443 he takes part in the founding of Pan-Hellenic colony at Thurii

430 he revisits Athens but returns to die at Thurii

9 INFLUENCES upon HERODOTUS

His IONIAN Background

Herodotus lived in Halicarnassus (under Ionian influence)
 in Samos (Ionian)
 in Athens (of Ionian origin)
 in Thurii (Ionians played leading part in its founding)

His History is written in Ionic dialect

His interest in the Ionian Greeks is shown by
 his references to his home-town Halicarnassus
 his detailed description of Samos
 (although he is critical of Ionians and thought the Ionian
 revolt was a foolish enterprise)

He was greatly influenced by Ionian thought + attitudes
 the idea of writing history was derived from the enquiring spirit of
 Ionian philosophers
 his international spirit and racial tolerance was derived from the Ionian
 experience of contacts with many Asian lands
 his study of foreign peoples + customs and his desire for scientific
 explanations was derived from the enquiring attitude of Ionian scientists
 he owed a great deal to the work of the Ionian geographer Hecataeus of Miletus
 he used much of his work in his own history

The Influence of HOMER

This is an extension of the influence of Ionia
 Homer's poems originated in Ionia

Herodotus was influenced by various aspects of Homer's work
 his desire to glorify by his work great deeds of the past
 his use of digressions from the main theme
 his understanding of intervention by the gods
 (although Herodotus was influenced by the Ionian enquiring spirit)
 his theme of a struggle between West/East, Europe/Asia
 his use of speeches to provide background, thoughts and feelings
 his understanding of the glory and tragedy of war
 the glory seen in great deeds in fighting
 the tragedy seen in death and grief
 his understanding of the universality of human feelings
 the glory + tragedy was the same for both sides - Greek+ Trojan

The Influence of ATHENS

Herodotus was greatly influenced by the tradition of Athens' heroic deeds in the
 Persian invasions
 at Marathon: their brave fighting (6:112, 9:27)
 at Salamis: their evacuation of Athens
 their insistence on fighting at sea (7:139)
 in 479 BC: their refusal to make terms with Persia (8:144)
 this sometimes makes him do less than justice to Sparta's role
 Sparta was the leader of the Greeks in the Persian War

He was influenced by the spirit of democratic freedom at Athens
 he contrasts this with the irrational despotism of the Persians
 he thought her democratic freedom was the cause of her success (5:78)
 (but he was also aware of the faults of democracy: in 5:97 he comments
 'it is easier to impose on a crowd than on an individual')

Much of his philosophy is influenced by the themes of Athenian tragedy
 that excessive prosperity arouses the jealousy of the gods
 this is seen in the downfall of Croesus + of Polycrates of Samos
 in 7:10 Artabanus tells Xerxes: 'it is the tallest trees which are
 struck by lightning'

that arrogance (hubris) is bound to be followed by retribution (nemesis)
 the downfall of Xerxes is the dominant theme of Aeschylus: THE PERSIANS
 this is caused by his overweening pride
 he tried to turn the sea into land by his Hellespont bridge
 'Was not this some madness that possessed him' (749ff)
 Herodotus reflects the same idea in 8:110

Themistocles says after Salamis:

'It was not we who performed this exploit; it was God.....
 a man who dared to lash the sea with whips and bind
 it with fetters.'

that oracles are fulfilled despite men's misunderstanding of them
 the oracle told Croesus that if he attacked the Persians he would
 destroy a great empire (he did - his own!) (1:52, 1:91)
 the oracle told the Athenians the wooden wall shall not fall (7:143, 8:51)
 (to Themistocles-the fleet: to some-the Acropolis wall)
 In Sophocles Oedipus the King 788ff:

Oedipus describes the oracle he received but shows he does
 not understand its real meaning

He was influenced by the political attitudes current at Athens
 anti-Thebes: they were detained against their will at Thermopylae
 anti-Corinth: this is seen in the misrepresentation (7:221, 204, 234)
 of the role of Adeimantus at Salamis (8:93-4) +(8:3)



Athenian Coins

10 How Herodotus' LIFE and BACKGROUND affected his HISTORY

<u>Halicarnassus</u>	Greek/Persian background a man of two cultures - 2 traditions about the War Ionian/Dorian influences knowledge of living under a tyranny
<u>Ionia</u>	spirit of philosophical/scientific enquiry wide international spirit + racial tolerance influence of the geographer Hecataeus of Miletus questioning attitude over intervention of the gods Herodotus was naturally a believer but was affected he blended rational explanation with divine intervention he did believe in warning of disasters truth of oracles rule of fate influence of Homer glorifying great deeds of the past interesting digressions East/West Asia/Europe struggle use of speeches understanding of glory/tragedy of war unbiased approach to both sides in the conflict
<u>His Travels</u>	remarkable experience following routes of Greek traders gave him much personal observation for his descriptions information based on many local informants gave him view of both worlds- Greek/Persian + understanding of geography of Persian Wars
<u>Athens</u>	spirit of democratic freedom provided contrast to Persian despotism tradition of great deeds in the Persian Wars at Marathon/Salamis/before Plataea influence of tragedy excessive prosperity arouses jealousy of the gods arrogance is followed by retribution seen in downfall of Xerxes after bridging Hellespont lashing the sea oracles are often misunderstood but are fulfilled Athenian tradition did not do justice to Sparta's leadership in the Persian Wars influence of Alomaeonid informers they dismissed any suggestion of treachery at Marathon they gave unfavourable stories about Themistocles anti-Theban attitude led to questioning their motives for staying at Thermopylae anti-Corinthian attitude led to misrepresentation of the part played by Adeimantus in the Salamis campaign
<u>Thurii</u>	gave experience of the W Greek world further Pan-Hellenic experience
<u>Limitations</u>	no military experience too young to take part in Persian Wars to meet the commanders lack of political understanding lack of economic understanding overstressed personal motives/ambition as reasons for action

11 HERODOTUS' ATTITUDE towards RELIGION

Herodotus has an ambiguous attitude towards the supernatural
 he seems to have been a believer in the intervention of the gods
 but he was affected by the Ionian spirit of scientific enquiry

He does believe in divine intervention

- 616 'many things make it plain to me that the gods take part in the affairs of men' (Greeks at Mycale heard of Plataea victory on same day)
321 'a piece of more than human luck' caused winds to blow Samian explorers from the E Mediterranean to beyond Strait of Gibraltar
417 many reasons were suggested for the death of Spartan Cleomenes
 Herodotus accepts it was a punishment (he had bribed Delphi in order to depose his fellow king Demaratus)
 'my own opinion is that Cleomenes came to grief as a punishment for what he did to Demaratus'
603 no dead Persians were found in sanctuary of Demeter after battle of Plataea
 'my own view is that the goddess herself would not let them in, because they had burnt her sanctuary at Eleusis'
535-7 Herodotus appears to believe in the alleged miracles when the Persians approached Delphi

Herodotus believed that disasters were often preceded by supernatural warnings

- 397 'it seems there is nearly always a warning of some kind when disaster is about to overtake a city or a nation'
 this statement refers to the capture of island of Chios by Histiaeus
 98 out of a choir of 100 died of plague at Delphi
 a school roof collapsed on children killing all but 1
 'both these events were acts of God to forewarn the people of Chios'
465 a mare gave birth to a hare after Xerxes crossed the Hellespont
 'Xerxes paid no attention to this omen, though the significance of it was easy enough to understand ... clearly it meant he was to lead an army against Greece and then to come running back for his life to the place he started from'

Herodotus believed in oracles

even though he knew they could be manipulated or misunderstood
 he frequently quotes the Delphic oracle
 he notes the affect the oracle had on people's behaviour

Herodotus believed in the efficacy of dreams

he quotes several examples of dreams that came true

to Croesus 54
 to Astyages 85
 to Cambyses 215, 230, 231

he notes the role of dreams in Xerxes' decision to invade Greece

Xerxes had 3 dreams/Artabanus had 1 449-452

but he does put into mouth of Artabanus a rationalist interpretation
 (even though this turns out to be wrong on this occasion)

Herodotus does attribute events to human agencies as well as divine causation

Croesus fell not just because of the wrath of the gods

but also because of the failure of his foreign policy

Xerxes was driven to war not just because of a dream sent from heaven

but also because of his great ambition

Xerxes was deceived at Salamis not only by the anger of the gods

but also by the cunning of Themistocles

the storm which destroyed the Persian fleet was a local type of storm

called a 'Hellespontian'

Herodotus discusses the Athenian statement that they begged

Boreas (the North Wind) to help them

'I cannot say if this was really the reason' 508

Herodotus seems to have believed in a heavenly power common to all mankind
 he describes this as 'the divine'
 this is how the Ionian scientist Anaximander described it earlier
 sometimes this divine power might be given the name of a god
 Apollo - if an oracle was being discussed
 this divine power kept the balance in the world

Herodotus also believed that the course of events is ruled by fate

44 reference to Lydian king Candaules 'who was doomed to a bad end'
78 when the Lydian messengers questioned Delphi about Croesus' downfall
 'the priestess replied that God himself could not escape destiny....
 the God of Prophecy (Apollo) was eager that the fall of Sardis
 might occur in the time of Croesus' sons rather than in his own, but
 he had been unable to divert the course of destiny'

Herodotus believed in the themes of tragedy:

that excessive prosperity arouses the jealousy of the gods
 this is seen in the downfall of Croesus and of Polycrates of Samos
 that arrogance ('hubris') is bound to be followed by retribution (nemesis)
 this is seen in the punishment of Xerxes at Salamis
 for his arrogance in bridging the Hellespont + lashing the sea
 it is also seen in the downfall of Croesus
54 'nemesis fell upon Croesus, presumably because God was
 angry with him for supposing himself the happiest of men'



Apollo

12 DREAMS in HERODOTUS

- 54 Croesus had a dream that his son Atys would be killed by a blow
from an iron weapon
He was killed by a stranger on a boar hunt
- 85 Astyages had 2 dreams about his daughter Mandane
Both dreams implied that her son (his grandson) would take over
his kingdom (of Media)
Her son Cyrus led a Persian revolt, took over the Median kingdom
and established the Persian Empire
- 125-6 Cyrus, while on campaign against the Massagetae, dreamed he saw
Darius with a pair of wings on his shoulders
one wing cast a shadow on Asia
the other cast a shadow on Europe
He thought this meant Darius would revolt against him
Herodotus comments: 'the real meaning of the dream was not as he
supposed: rather it was sent by God to warn
him of his death then and there, and of the
ultimate succession of Darius to the throne'
- 215 Cambyes dreamed that his brother Smerdis was sitting on his throne
230-1 and that his head touched the sky
He thought this meant that his brother would kill him and reign
in his stead
So he had his brother killed
Eventually one of the Magi whose name was Smerdis rebelled against him
this man pretended to be the dead brother of the king
- 253-4 Polycrates' daughter had a dream which foretold disaster for her father
449 1st dream of Xerxes
a figure of a man appeared to him
it told him not to change his mind but to go ahead with
the invasion of Greece
- 449-450 2nd dream of Xerxes
the figure reappeared
it told him that if he did not undertake the invasion he
would fall from power as quickly as he had risen
- 450-1 Artabanus gives rationalist explanation of dreams
they are the shadows of our thoughts during the day
- 451 Dream of Artabanus
the same figure appeared to him
it threatened punishment on him for trying to dissuade
Xerxes from the invasion
it was about to burn out his eyes
- 452 Artabanus commented: 'now I know that God is at work in this matter
.....since apparently heaven itself is about
to send ruin upon Greece, I admit that I was
mistaken tell the Persians about the
vision which God has sent us'
- 452 3rd dream of Xerxes
he imagined himself crowned with olive
suddenly the crown disappeared from his head
The Magi interpreted this as foretelling the conquest of the world
and its subjection to Persia
Herodotus makes no comment on this interpretation
- Herodotus seems to believe in the efficacy of dreams
He refers to 'the real meaning' of Cyrus' dream
All the dreams he quotes have an apparent fulfilment
He is aware of rationalist explanations for dreams
(but this explanation proved wrong on that occasion)

13 The DELPHIC ORACLE in HERODOTUS

- 46 Oracle confirmed Gyges as king of Lydia
after he had murdered the previous king Candaules
Gyges dedicated offerings of silver + gold to Delphi
- 58 Croesus, king of Lydia, tested the truth of various oracles
Delphi the only one to say he was cutting up a tortoise + lamb
and boiling them in a bronze cauldron
Croesus sent rich presents to Delphi
- 60 Oracle to Croesus after he had asked whether to attack Persia
if he attacked the Persian Empire 'he would destroy a great empire'
2nd oracle to Croesus after he asked whether his reign would be long
he should beware 'the day that a mule should sit on the Median throne'
- 78-9 Croesus complained to the oracle after his defeat by Persia
Delphi replied he should have asked which empire was meant
he had failed to understand that Cyrus was the mule
- 362 The Alcmaeonid Family in exile built a temple at Delphi
They bribed the priestess to tell the Spartans to free Athens from tyrants
- 374-6 3 oracles concerning Cypselus the tyrant of Corinth
- 394-5 Oracle predicting the downfall of Miletus after the Ionian Revolt
Herodotus notes: 'this is just what happened to the Milesians'
- 411 The Spartan Cleomenes manipulates the oracle over the birth of Demaratus
Demaratus was deposed from being Spartan king
- 488-9 Athens consulted the oracle 480 BC
1st oracle very pessimistic: 'all is ruined bow your hearts to grief'
2nd oracle more hopeful: 'the wooden wall only shall not fall
..... divine Salamis will bring death
to women's sons'
some Athenians thought 'wooden wall' referred to an old wall
round the Acropolis
Themistocles thought it referred to the ships and that the phrase
'divine Salamis' was hopeful
- 504 (before the Battle of Thermopylae)
The people of Delphi prayed to the oracle for their safety + that of Greece
They were told 'pray to the winds, for they will be good allies to Greece'
- 517-8 Herodotus believed Leonidas stayed at Thermopylae because of an oracle
this oracle was given to Sparta at the start of the war
either Sparta must be destroyed or a Spartan king must be killed
Herodotus comments: 'I believe it was the thought of this oracle (+ the
desire to win fame for the Spartans) that made
Leonidas dismiss the other troops'
- 535-7 Persian troops came to Delphi to plunder the temple 480 BC
The people of Delphi were told by the god not to be disturbed
'the god was well able to guard his own'
As the Persians approached - sacred weapons were mysteriously brought out
and laid on the ground outside the shrine
- thunderbolts + rocks fell on the Persians
- many Persians were killed
a battle cry sounded inside the shrine
The Persians fled from Delphi
Herodotus comments: 'the rocks which fell from Parnassus were still
there in my time'

Other References to Oracles

48, 65-6, 108, 111, 227, 230-1, 276, 320-1, 323-5, 326-7, 356, 364,
369, 370, 372-3, 399, 419, 436-7, 438, 492, 500-1

Herodotus' Attitude to the Delphic Oracle

He gives considerable scope to the Delphic Oracle in his History
 he quotes it frequently
 he had clearly been to Delphi

In many of his quotations he appears to believe the truth of the oracle Croesus tested many oracles - Delphi was the only one correct (58) Herodotus seems to believe the effectiveness of the oracles concerning Cypselus (374-6) He points out how the oracle predicting the destruction of Miletus was fulfilled after the Ionian Revolt (394)

His account of the Persian flight from Delphi seems to assume divine intervention

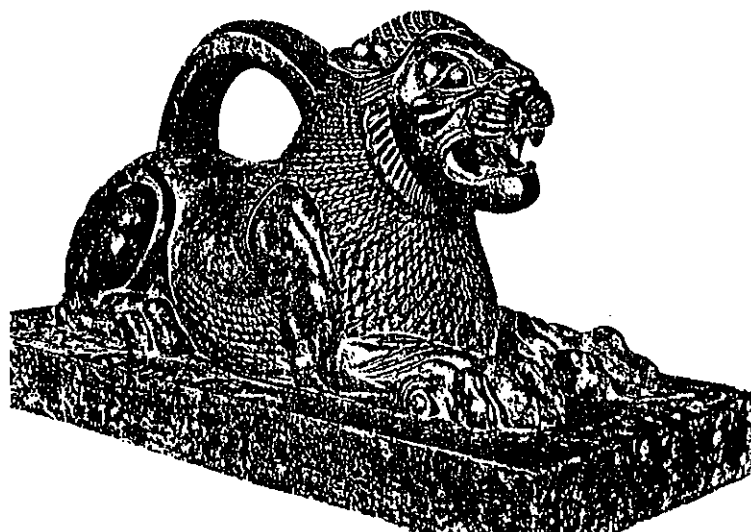
He is aware of attempts to manipulate the oracle
by the Alcmaeonid family - to get rid of tyrants at Athens (362)
by the Spartan Cleomenes - about the parentage of Demaratus (Spartan king)
(411)

He is aware of the effect of the oracle on people's behaviour
(without necessarily implying its truth)
he thinks Leonidas stayed at Thermopylae because of an oracle
some Athenians stayed on the Acropolis because of 'wooden wall' oracle

He is always torn between - his traditional religious belief
- the growing scepticism of the age
(partly through the Ionian spirit of scientific enquiry)
he did believe in the truth of oracles in general
this belief is summed up when discussing the oracle of Bacis
(a separate collection of ancient oracles)
Bacis' oracle predicted the Greek victory at Salamis
'with that utterance of Bacis in mind, absolutely clear as it is,
I do not venture to say anything against prophecies, nor will I
listen to criticism from others' (549)
he also pointed out that when the people of Euboea ignored an oracle of Bacis
'the result was great suffering, both then and later' (531)
he believed that oracles could seem wrong because they were misunderstood
Croesus misinterpreted the 'destroy a great empire' oracle (78-9)
Mardonius enquired about oracles before Battle of Plataea (594-5)
he knew of one oracle but misapplied it
Herodotus comments: 'there are, however, some verses of Bacis
which did, in fact, refer to this battle'

Herodotus' Characterization of Xerxes

- ambitious: eager to match his predecessors
- in extension of Persian empire
 - in invasion of Greece
 - in construction of Mt Athos canal
 - in offering sacrifice at Troy
- young/risk-taker: seen in contrast with old/cautious Artabanus
- especially in their conversation(461-3)
 - also in the rejection of Artemisia's advice at Salamis
- unpredictable: -executed the bridge engineers after storm
- spared Spartan envoys
 - gave money to Pythias - then cut son in half
 - praised Persian sea captain - then beheaded him
- emotional: - seems genuinely upset at Pythias' attitude
- he was risking members of his own family
 - wept at thought of his soldiers' death
 - very upset at death of Artachaees (canal builder/very tall/loud voice)
- religious: - offered sacrifice at Troy
- offered sacrifice at dawn before bridge crossing
 - poured libation of rising sun before final day at Thermopylae
- arrogant: - lashed Hellespont after storm destroyed bridges
- used arrogant words: 'your master punishes you'
 - 'Xerxes will cross whether you will or not'
- tolerant (ocasionally):- he eventually tolerated Artabanus' opposition to invasion
- he allowed Demaratus to tell the truth about Spartans
 - he respected Artemisia for her frank advice
- despotic leader: - his personal decision always prevails
- Persians cross bridge under the lash
 - he beheaded Phoenician captains who lost ships at Salamis
 - his leadership is contrasted with Greek freedom/bravery
 - (as depicted by Demaratus)
- a tragic figure: his arrogance + impiety leads to his downfall
- invasion of Europe is his plan to enlarge Persian empire
- he is broken by its failure



Herodotus' Characterisation of Artabanus

he provides a contrast to Xerxes

he represents the generation of Xerxes' father

- as opposed to the new generation of Xerxes + Mardonius

he represents the point of view of a wise old man

- as opposed to the reckless young Xerxes

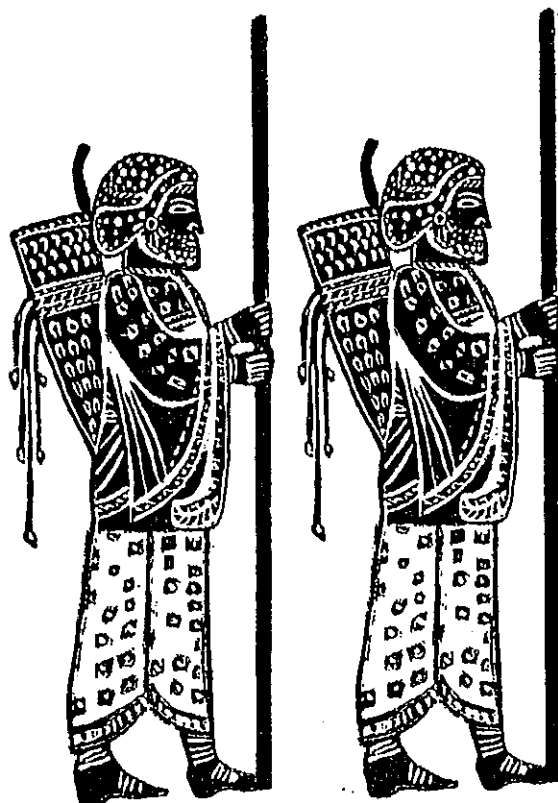
his caution and his wisdom are stressed (he is proved right in the end)

he introduces a rationalist view of dreams

he has a pessimistic view of human life + achievement

he expresses the tragic view - the gods strike the successful

his assessment of the dangers facing the Persians is proved to be right



Guards of the Persian royal palace

- 561-2 T demanded money from the islands if they did not surrender
(they were on the Persian side)
- T besieged Andros
he said Athens had 2 gods: 'Persuasion' + 'Compulsion'
people of Andros said they had 2 gods: 'Poverty' + 'Inability'
- T 'always greedy for money' demanded money from other islands
Carystos + Paros paid - others may have done
the other commanders knew nothing of T's extortion of money
- 566 Prize for valour at Salamis
all commanders put their own name first
T's name second
so no decision
- Herodotus comments: 'Themistocles' name was on everyone's lips,
and he acquired the reputation of being by far the most
able man in the country'
- T went to Sparta
he was honoured by - a wreath of olive
- a chariot
- an escort to the border
(when an Athenian abused him for going to Sparta T made a witty reply)

References to Themistocles in Thucydides

- 1:74 T at Battle of Salamis
- 1:90-3 T tricks Spartans over building of Athenian fortifications
T builds walls of Piraeus
- 1:135-8 T accused of collaboration with Persia flees to the Persian king (after
T dies ruling Magnesia in the Persian Empire being ostracised)
- no reference to T's bribery/greed in Thucydides

Herodotus' Characterisation of Themistocles

- he is an example of Athenian brilliance + resilience
in contrast to the stolidity of the Spartans
- he stressed naval policy
as opposed to nobles like Aristides who stressed hoplite power of army
- he stands as an example of Greek inventiveness
he tricked the Persians by his brilliant planning
- he is the undoubted hero of Salamis
but Herodotus is using sources which are hostile to him whenever possible
this may represent the viewpoint of the Alcmaeonid family
there was great political rivalry at Athens
because of this rivalry he later fled to Persia
Thuc 1:135 tells us that he was ostracised and lived in Argos
before he fled to Persia
but Thuc makes no reference to bribery or greed



15 DIFFERENCES between HERODOTUS and a MODERN HISTORIAN

in his SUBJECT MATTER

nearly half the book seems to be social geography rather than history
 it deals with countries/people/customs of the Persian Empire
 Ionian Revolt leading to invasion of Greece comes in Book 5
 not clear whether H's original aim was to write history or geography

in his inclusion of DIGRESSIONS

H frequently digresses from his main subject matter
 he has a long digression on Polycrates of Samos (220-229)
 mention of Greek envoys to Sicily causes him to digress to tell
 how Gelon came to power at Syracuse (494-6)
 after his account of Battle of Thermopylae he digresses to tell
 how the Spartans first heard of Persian invasion from Demaratus (524)

in his inclusion of ANECDOTES

H frequently includes stories which have no direct bearing on his History
 the story of Arion and the Dolphin (49)
 the death of Atys (Croesus' son) (54-7)
 the robbing of the treasure of Rhampsinitus (175-7)
 the story of Polycrates of Samos (220-2, 252-5)
 H also includes stories which have some bearing on his History but are
 not strictly necessary:
 the story of Gyges (44-5)
 the boyhood of Cyrus (85-92)
 the discussion of monarchy/oligarchy/democracy (238-240)
 Solon's visit to Croesus (51-53)
 the story how Darius won the horse-neighing contest (241-2)

in his inclusion of SPEECHES/CONVERSATIONS

H followed the tradition of Homer in the Iliad + the Odyssey in including
 speeches in his work when he cannot have known the precise words
 H does this to provide background detail, characterisation + motives of
 the chief participants
 H uses the same technique to describe conversations
 speeches of Xerxes/Mardonius/Artabanus in the Persian conference (443-8)
 Xerxes' conversations with Demaratus (475-7, 514, 521-2)
 Xerxes' conversation with Artabanus (460-3)
 speech of Artemisia before Salamis (545-6)

in his stress on the role of INDIVIDUALS

H is especially interested in the role of individuals rather than in
 political or economic factors
 this is seen in his stress on the personality of Xerxes
 Persians invade Greece not for reasons of trade
 or for the strategic extension of the Persian Empire
 but to satisfy Xerxes personal whims for glory and revenge
 throughout his work H is interested in individuals rather than groups
 Croesus/Cyrus/Artabanus/Democedes the Greek doctor/Leonidas
 Demaratus the ex-Spartan king/Themistocles/Mardonius

in his ACCEPTANCE of the PHILOSOPHY of TRAGEDY

H accepted the beliefs underlying tragedy
 that excessive prosperity arouses the jealousy of the gods
 that arrogance ('hubris') is bound to be followed by
 retribution ('nemesis')
 this is seen in:
 the downfall of Croesus
 the downfall of Polycrates of Samos
 the punishment of Xerxes at Salamis

in his LIMITATIONS as a MILITARY HISTORIAN

- H was writing a history of a war - but has some limitations
 - he had no personal military experience
 - he greatly exaggerated the Persian numbers
 - not by invention but by misunderstanding
 - his battle descriptions tend to be accounts of individual exploits
 - this is especially so at Salamis (compare Aeschylus THE PERSIANS)
 - his battle descriptions lack any psychological 'feel'
 - there is no terror/apprehension/excitement/joy
 - one would expect these feelings in the vital battle at Salamis
 - Aeschylus has them in THE PERSIANS

in his ATTITUDE to RELIGION and SUPERSTITION

- H seems to have believed in the intervention of a divine power
 - though he does also accept rationalist explanations
 - 'many things make it plain to me that the gods take part in the affairs of man' (616)
 - he appears to believe that the Persians were turned aside from Delphi by the power of the god
- H also believed that disasters were often preceded by supernatural warnings
 - before the capture of Chios disasters occurred (397)
 - a school roof collapsed killing children
 - almost all of a choir died of the plague at Delphi
- H believed in oracles - especially that at Delphi
 - he quotes many examples of oracles and shows how they were fulfilled
 - Croesus: 'he would destroy a great empire'
 - Athens: 'the wooden wall'
 - (though he was aware the oracle could be manipulated for political reasons and could be misunderstood)
- H seems to have believed in the efficacy of dreams
 - he quotes several examples and shows how they were fulfilled
 - Croesus' dream about his son Atys (54)
 - Cyrus' dream about Darius (125-6)
 - Cambyses' dream about his brother Smerdis (215,230-1)
 - the dreams of Xerxes + Artabanus (449ff)
 - yet he is aware of a possible rational explanation of dreams
 - Artabanus gives this (450-1) (but it is proved wrong on that occasion)

SIMILARITIES to a MODERN HISTORIAN

- H shows a general lack of bias
 - he is fair in describing exploits/characters of both Greeks + Persians
 - this is in line with the tradition of Homer on Greeks + Trojans
 - it also reflects H's own cosmopolitan background
- H's work is based on extensive travels + personal research
 - he had visited many of the countries he wrote about
 - he made numerous enquiries of the people he met
- H's account of units of the Persian force (though numbers are exaggerated)
 - is based on research into Persian army lists
- H is often aware that there are 2 points of view on a matter
 - he gives a critical view of the Corinthian part in Battle of Salamis
 - but he adds 'the Corinthians do not admit the truth of it .. and the rest of Greece gives evidence in their favour' (554-5)
 - he gives 2 versions of Xerxes return to Asia
 - but strongly prefers a land journey (564-5)

16 HERODOTUS' QUALITIES as a MILITARY HISTORIAN

NO MILITARY BACKGROUND

apart from civil disorder at Halicarnassus H never fought in a war
 this lack of military experience sometimes affects his writing
 his estimate of Persian forces is totally impossible
 his accounts of fighting lack psychological 'feel' (fear/excitement)

his MILITARY SOURCES

he was writing 20/30 years after Persian Wars
 many of the participants were dead - including all the commanders
 Xerxes/Mardonius/Miltiades/Themistocles/Leonidas
 his informants were below the highest level of command
 they only had a partial view of what happened
 especially in sea battles like Artemisium + Salamis
 ordinary soldier/sailor only knows his part of the battle
 not the overall strategy

H did have a wide range of witnesses
 at Halicarnassus/in Ionia/at Athens/in Delphi/other places in Greece
H was faced with the difficulty of
 conflicting accounts/biased information/failing memory

his COSMOPOLITAN BACKGROUND

H had a wide international outlook
 brought up at Halicarnassus in Persian Empire
 lived at Samos an important Ionian centre
 travelled extensively in Mediterranean world + Near East
 resided at Athens
 visited Delphi and other places in Greece
H gained a wide-ranging view of the War
 he was familiar with Persian views and experiences
 he was well acquainted with the Greek aims for defending Greece
H showed no racial bias
 he described achievements of Greeks + Persians equally
 although he is sympathetic to the heroic defence of Greece
 he does not show the Persians in a critical light
 (apart from the contrast he makes between Persian despotism
 and Greek freedom)

TRAGIC OVERTONES in his account

he was imbued with the philosophy of the tragedians
 especially that arrogance ('hubris') is bound to be followed
 by retribution ('nesesis')
 this colours his account of the defeat of Xerxes
 Themistocles says after Salamis that it was God who punished Xerxes
 for lashing the sea and binding it with chains

His STRESS on the ROLE of INDIVIDUALS

H was more interested in part played by individuals
 than in political or economic factors
 his analysis of the reasons for the Persian invasion is virtually limited
 to Xerxes' personal whims
 his desire to match achievements of his ancestors
 his desire to win personal glory
 his desire for revenge on Athens
H does not comment on need to expand Persian trade
 to extend their empire and sphere of influence
H says that Leonidas stayed at his post at Thermopylae
 in order to fulfil an oracle
 for the glory of Sparta
H does not mention the need to cover the retreat of the rest of the army

INFLUENCE of RELIGION/ORACLES/DREAMS

- H appears to believe in divine intervention
 - he explicitly says so (616)
 - he seems to believe that the Persians were turned away from Delphi by the power of the god (535-7)
- H often quotes oracles and their fulfilment
 - he explicitly says he believes in oracles (549)
 - he had been to Delphi and makes frequent references to the Delphic Oracle
- H knows that oracles may be manipulated and misunderstood
 - but he believes in them in general
- H knew that oracles affected people's behaviour
 - the 'wooden wall' oracle caused some Athenians to shelter on Acropolis (540)
 - the 'death of a king' oracle may have affected Leonidas (517)

EXAGGERATION of PERSIAN NUMBERS

- H estimated size of Persian armed forces at about 2½ million
 - he then estimated servants/camp followers/back-up services at same number
 - this made a grand total of just over 5 million
 - this is an impossible figure
 - it could not have been transported or provisioned
- H did not realise this because of lack of military experience
- H did not wildly guess the Persian armed forces
 - his account is detailed - unit by unit
 - he seems to be using Persian army records
 - he did not realise that the whole force would not go on campaign
- H was also affected by the tradition in Greece (+ especially at Athens)
 - of the 'few' against the 'many' in the defence of Greece
 - this tradition had grown in the intervening years since the Persian Wars
- modern military writers have estimated Persian forces at about 200,000
 - this would still have been an unprecedented force in Greece
 - the Greeks would never have encountered anything like it
 - they would be outnumbered by about 10 to 1
 - hence the tradition of the size of the Persian forces

UNDERSTANDING of PERSIAN LAND/SEA STRATEGY

- H understood the dual strategy of the Persians
 - throughout their journey through N Greece army + fleet kept together
 - this dual strategy caused the Greeks to make joint defence at Artemisium at Thermopylae
- H was aware that defeat at Thermopylae inevitably caused Greeks to abandon their position at Thermopylae

GREEK DEFENCE of THESSALY

- H is not clear why the Greeks abandoned their first plan to defend the pass of Tempe in N Thessaly
- H says they were advised by Alexander of Macedon not to stay
 - he adds that he thinks they left because they learned there was another pass into Thessaly
- but Thessaly was in political disarray
 - the ruling family the Aleuadae had already surrendered to Persia
 - H tells us 'they were the first Greeks to submit to Persian king (484)
 - other Thessalians had sent representatives to Greek conference at the Isthmus asking for help by defence of pass of Tempe (502)
- H shows a lack of appreciation of Thessalian politics
 - he knows the facts but not their implications
 - he shows a lack of political awareness
- the Greeks on arrival in Thessaly quickly realised the political disunity and retreated

his GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

through his travels H had a good geographical knowledge
 his account of the Persian advance through Thrace and Thessaly shows knowledge
 his geographical setting of the Battles of Thermopylae/Artemisium/Salamis
 is good
 he knows the nature of the country + its implications for fighting

BIAS in his ACCOUNTS

H shows a general pro-Athenian bias
 he says Athens was mainly responsible for the successful resistance
 to the Persians (487)
 he admits this will be an unpopular opinion
 (in the 450's Athens was at war with Sparta + Corinth)
 he praises Athens for her democracy (369)
H does not seem to do justice to Sparta
 Sparta was the leader of the Greek confederacy against Persia
H seems biased against Thebes (a traditional enemy of Athens)
 Leonidas kept the Thebans back at Thermopylae 'against their will' (518)
 the Thebans only made 'a show of resistance' in the battle
 ceased fighting at earliest moment and surrendered (521)
H seems biased against Corinth and especially their general Adeimantus
 he has to be bribed by Themistocles to stay at Artemisium (526)
 he continually abused Themistocles in the pre-Salamis conference (542-3)
 according to the Athenians he fled in panic at start of Battle of Salamis
 and only returned after the action was over (554-5)
 but H does add:
 'the Corinthians do not admit the truth of it and the rest
 of Greece gives evidence in their favour'
 Plutarch (Gk writer 1st cent AD) tells us:
 that on Adeimantus' tombstone was the epithet
 'he who by his counsels saved all Greece'
 that Adeimantus gave his daughters proud names
 one was called Nausinike 'Sea-Victory'
 that on a cenotaph at the Isthmus of Corinth was the inscription:
 'when all Greece balanced on a razor, we,
 at cost of our own lives, preserved her free'
H's attitude seems the result of Athenian hostility to Corinth
 in the 450's Athens was at war with Corinth
 Adeimantus's son Aristeus was an enemy of the Athenian Empire
 he was killed by them 430 BC (H 7:137, Thuc 1:60,2:67)
H seems to be using sources hostile to Themistocles
 he is the undoubted hero of Salamis but is often shown in a bad light
 he made a profit out of bribes from Euboeans at Artemisium (526)
 he tried to curry favour with Xerxes after Salamis (560-1)
 he demanded money from the Greek islands after Salamis (561-2)
 Themistocles had many political rivals at Athens (including Alcmaeonidae)
 was ostracised sometime after Salamis
 eventually fled to Persian Empire

his BATTLE ACCOUNTS

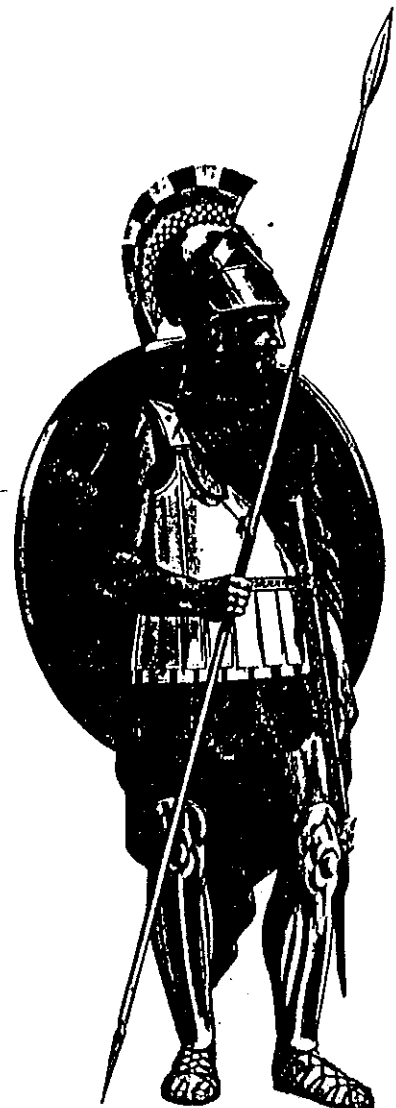
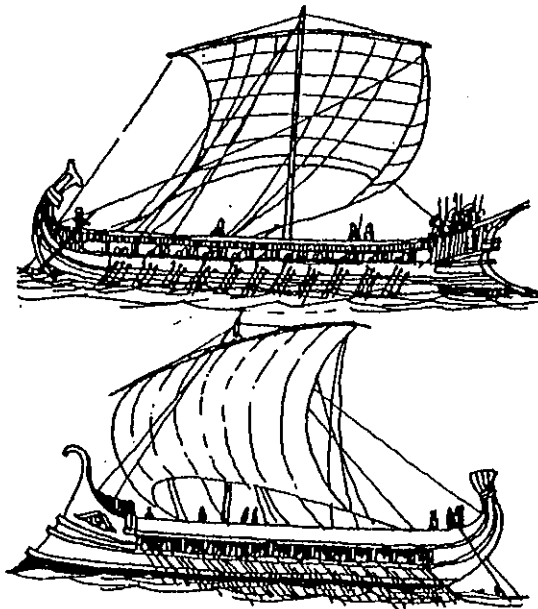
H's accounts of land battles (Marathon/Thermopylae) are clear
 his sea-battles (Artemisium/Salamis) tend to be a series of engagements
 without any overall pattern
 his battle accounts lack any psychological 'feel'
 there are no hopes/fears, no feelings of terror/excitement
 contrast Thucydides' account of the Battle in Great Harbour of Syracuse

BATTLES in Books 7 + 8Thermopylae/Artemisium

he has a good geographical knowledge of the area
 he understands the dual strategy of army/navy
 he understands how the encircling movement destroyed the
 Greek position
 his description of land fighting is clear
 he is not convincing on the reasons for Leonidas maintaining
 his position (because of an oracle + for Spartan glory)
 to cover retreat of rest of army is more likely
 his account of movements off Artemisium is not very clear
 but it was an engagement over several days
 knowledge of sea-battles is more difficult
 (each participant has limited knowledge + vision)

Salamis

he has good knowledge of the Greek aims
 his account of the Greek strategy is clear and convincing
 vital that the sea-battle should take place in the narrows
 but his account of the actual fighting lacks any detail
 it is a series of isolated incidents and anecdotes
 there is no psychological 'feel' in H's account of this struggle
 which was so vital for the safety of Greece



19 HERODOTUS' AIMS in writing his HISTORY

Herodotus himself mentions 2 aims:

- to record the astonishing achievements of Greeks + other peoples
- to show how the Greeks came into conflict with the Persians

(41)

Other subsidiary aims are clear from his work:

- to show the contrast between the Persians under a despotic government and the Greeks living in freedom
- to bring out in his account the themes of tragedy:
 - that excessive success leads to downfall
seen in the fate of Croesus and the fate of Polycrates
 - that arrogance is bound to lead to retribution
seen in the disaster that befell Xerxes

