The Children of Herodotus
The Children of Herodotus:
Greek and Roman Historiography
and Related Genres

Edited by

Jakub Pigoń

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For fifty years I have listened to sermons preached by preachers in their pulpit.¹ To this day I vividly remember Good Friday 1959 when my Vicar, Rev. Stephen Skemp, said that he would now read a poem that would sum up his feelings about the agony of Christ hanging on the Cross. Then he added, “Oh dear! I seem to have left the poem at home.” After that his sermon broke down. One must to bear in mind that in those days the Good Friday service lasted three hours from twelve o’clock noon to 3 pm and this poem would have been the basis of a 40-minute sermon. What emerged from this was that he had not prepared his sermon but had relied on the text of the poem from which he could comment and improvise. But without the text, he was lost.

For fifty years I have heard preachers reading out sermons, delivering sermons, reciting sermons, making up sermons, muttering sermons, and apologizing for their scattered thoughts. Again all of us in this room have heard academics delivering lectures, sometimes with their nose in the page, sometimes facing, looking at or glaring at their audience. I propose to you that we will never know how good or how bad a lecturer or potential preacher Herodotus was, but in this paper I will try to piece together the internal and external evidence we have for his lecturing and

¹ I gave an earlier version of this talk in Birmingham on 14th April 2007 at the Classical Association Annual Conference where there was a two-day panel on Herodotus. After the talk I was overwhelmed with questions such as “Where would Herodotus give his lectures? Would he have used notes or jottings to back up his memory? How long would such a lecture be?” I am grateful for the stimulation provided by those questioners and now attempt to address my title and give a historical background to this conundrum.
writing, pre-publishing, publishing and post-publishing stages of his enquiries, his historie, rather than his history. It is a symptom of the vibrancy of Herodotean studies that well known scholars come up with utterly contrasting conclusions on his recital or reading of his works or his lecturing from the finished work or from episodes of the whole. At the one extreme, inflexible unitarians, such as Schöll, Immerwahr and Rösling, argue that Herodotus and Thucydides belong to the same literary culture with both aiming at a permanent possession and monument through their writings, arguing that the internal evidence of Herodotus’ Histories can only indicate unbroken and consistent logical unity from start to finish without the possibility of breaking the work up into sections. Analysts, on the other hand, such as Jacoby, are convinced that the work is composed of sections which individually or in combination were designed to be delivered orally in front of an audience and whose performance has in turn helped to shape the text we now have. They produced a developmental hypothesis whereby they determined the existence of separate narratives and they indicate the likelihood of shifting interests over the presumed years of composition and editing. I would add an oral source- and performance-school which sees Herodotus swimming in oral sources and living in a “talkative” performance environment, even if statistics for literacy spike between 10% and 15% in rural Attica alone in the 5th century BC. Scholars, such as Munson or Stadter, vow that even the word graphein refers to spoken output, that the text betrays oral culture and sources and was strictly intended for performance throughout Herodotus’ life in palaestra, symposium, festival, private houses or even on army campaigns or in soldiers’ barracks. I hope to prove that these three approaches are “not incompatible with each other since they serve different ends” (Fornara 1971b, 5).

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2 Evans 1991, 90, 99f.; Raaflaub 2002, 152f.; Thomas 2002, 257-60. Marincola (1997, 1) supports Stadter’s view that Herodotus did not read from a written text and that his text as we have it represents a particular address to a specific audience and may not have been that used when he spoke before other audiences. This view is opposed by Harrison (2000, 3 n. 7) and Johnson (1994, 252). See Alcidamas, On Those Who Write Written Speeches, for the most articulate, if polemical, near contemporary discussion of the relation of performance and written texts, memorised or not. Note the warning from Waters (1985, 27): “we should not expect sermons from Herodotus, for historians need not preach!”

3 The situation is well summed by Lateiner (1989, introd., esp. 4f.) and expatiated on by de Jong (2002, 245-66) in an entire chapter.
I begin with an anecdote about our son Ville who when he was three years old always went to sleep to the accompaniment of Herodotus. He found Herodotus charming, amusing and diverting and he was always climbing up the bookcase to get hold of the Histories. The trick is to explain this attraction of Herodotus’ prose and “turn it into scholarship” (Slings 2000, 53).

Scholarly attention has long been focussed on the expression apodexis in the first sentence of Herodotus’ Histories.4 There is controversy over its implications for the structure and narrative of the Histories and secondly for the performance of the work. On the one hand, the first-person presence in the text, the expression of personal opinion, the overt disagreement with others, are similar to what we see in the works dealing with medicine and philosophy.5 This resonates with Collins’ perception of “capping” in earlier epic, tragedy and comedy (Collins 2004).6 On the other hand Herodotus’ text has been seen as an oral product and as the telling of a story as opposed to an academic lecture since there are recognizable oral strategies in the language of Herodotus that must also be taken into account. He has a predilection for fuzzy syntax and resorts to anaphora which is a typical “chunking” strategy that speakers use in order to arrange their thoughts as they formulate them.

Herodotus’ Histories consist of shorter histories and of summaries of events that are peripheral to his main concern. This has led some critics to compare his shorter histories to short stories, such as those written by Chekhov, Kipling, Somerset Maughan, Henry James or Edgar Allen Poe, or to the multi-volumed and serialized fiction of Dickens.7 These shorter histories are often recounted in rich detail and decorated with verbatim reports of numerous conversations, often told in Herodotus’ own person

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5 West (1985, 294) postulates that the use of the first person could well be an empty literary convention with no connection to the author’s autobiography.

6 Thomas 2002, 235-48, with the often cited statistic from Dewald who has counted 1087 first persons in the Histories (Dewald 1987, 150 n. 10; 159-63). See further discussion and references in Thomas on first person as the critic.

7 Shaw 1983, 7; Flory 1980, 17 n. 21: “Dickens’ long serialised narratives would not have ended up as whole novels if the author had not sought to satisfy the cravings of an established reading public for ‘three-decker’ books. Herodotus could count on no such audience.”
Chapter One

and at other times reported on someone else’s authority. The there is considerable debate as to whether these shorter stories or shorter histories could have once been the basis for lectures delivered on his travels to various places. This theory has two versions, either that the Histories provided the material for the lectures, or that the lectures formed the basis for the text of the Histories (earlier views in Jacoby 1913a, esp. 330 and 379f., and Myres 1953, 20-31). One particularly moot point is whether the activities of Greek historians can be compared to those of sophists and philosophers who were itinerant lecturers. Nagy would go so far as to rank Homeric rhapsodes (aoidoi) in the same category as itinerant historians (logioi or logographoi), with Homer as the supreme aoidos and Herodotus as the ultimate logios. Friedman picks up the concept of the itinerant worker (demiourgos) from Odyssey 17.382-6 and links the rhapsode and historian to Thomas’ concept of the itinerant physician or scientist. I would add the Egyptian preachers or priests to this list. These professions are all rolled into one in Herodotus’ self-presentation in the narrative (Friedman 2006, 169; Thomas 2000, 249-69).

Some critics have envisaged the stories or episodes as being linked to one another in a structure similar to “beads on a string,” with the implicit idea that such stringing reflects the author’s proclivity to digression (Bakker 2006, 93; Immerwahr 1966, 47 and 49). Aristotle called this early (paratactic) prose lexis eiromene, the strung-on way of speaking, in contrast to lexis katestrammene, composed or periodic units, hypotactic sentence with a beginning, middle and an end that give a sense of finitude and closure where less important elements are subordinated to the more important idea. Immerwahr (1966) is the most famous analyst of Herodotus’ paratactic style. When a digression ends and there is a structural necessity of returning to the main line of the story, we get “ring composition” whereby a paratactic unit comes to a close in referring back to its beginning. Immerwahr distinguished paratactic καί and antithetic μέν and δέ as two types of linkage. Bakker (2006, 94) borrows Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ term ἐν μίᾳ συντάξει for Herodotus’ putting together of

8 Here I try to avoid the overused word logos, the “buzzword of buzzwords,” as Pelling puts it (1997, 1) or “notoriously polyvalent term” in Boedeker’s words (2000, 108). Sometimes it seems to refer to the whole work and the manner of its presentation as in Hdt. 2.123.1: “it underlies my whole logos that I write the things said by various people to my hearing.” With logos in this sense, Herodotus comes close to talking explicitly about generic features of his work (Boedeker ibid.).

9 Nagy 1987, 184: “The history of Herodotus the logios is in effect subsuming, not just continuing, the epic of Homer the aoidos.” In the same volume, Lang (1987, 203f.) criticizes his use of the word logios. Nagy (1990, 221-24) restates his case.
various histories. *Syntaxis* here represents a general characterization of Herodotus’ style. Bakker believes that *syntaxis* cuts through the contrast between parataxis and hypotaxis mentioned above. The shorter stories that make up the *Histories* are neither beads on a string nor strictly hierarchically ordered. They are put together in *syntaxis* perhaps involving a shift in time and space. Herodotus had no visual means of organising his text with subheadings, indentations or footnotes on the printed page. He had to integrate all his stories explaining the conflict between Greek and barbarians into one continuous history. Herodotus then joins these heterogeneous stories by his author’s voice, his historian’s orienting voice, his narrator’s voice. This gives the work, according to Bakker, its “performative” or “recitative” quality. The text is structured by the needs of a listening audience. According to this interpretation, the text itself is seen as an *apodexis*—an enactment or performance of his researches and investigations. The world of the *apodexis* and *epidexis* in its wider and earlier sense may help give substance to the picture of Herodotean performance and help interpret some elements of his style (see also n. 4).

Herodotus’ delivery of lectures is well known if sometimes doubted. Though the precise testimony that he gave lectures tends to become fuller in later authors, it would be implausible to think that Herodotus of all writers of this period did not give public lectures or oral performances of some kind. It is significant that later writers could simply assume he delivered lectures. But modern scholars have been reticent about quite

10 Gould 1989, 7f.; Thomas 2000, 257. Jacoby admitted (1913a, 242): “Eigentliche ‘Zeugnisse’ haben wir natürlich nicht und können sie nicht haben,” yet added that lecture tours were typical of that period. The Brill volume (Bakker, de Jong and van Wees 2002) contains one chapter against lecturing (Rössler) and three chapters for it (Bakker, Slings and Raaflaub). E.g. Slings 2002, 63: “And I do think we should take seriously the reports that Herodotus read his work before an audience even if oral strategies are *toto caelo* different from strategies that may have been used by a ‘performer’ who proceeded aurally.”

11 Luc. Her. 1 (on Herodotus performing at the Olympic Games); cf. Pohlenz 1937, 208; Powell 1939, 32f.; critical discussion in Johnson 1994; Gould 2002, 16f.: “Only one thing is relatively clear about Herodotus’ original audience: that it was an audience rather than a readership. We have almost certainly to imagine Herodotus’ reading aloud his text, in whole or part, to an audience gathered to hear him perform. Herodotus is composing his huge narrative for a world in which the dissemination of literature is still essentially oral, as it still was for Thucydides in the next generation.” Gould further argues (2002, 137 n. 19): “We are dealing with a culture with a quite different experience from our own of extended performance (of Hom. *Il.* and *Od.*, for example), and it is dangerous to offer arguments of probability based on our own experience in such things.”
how they envisage these performances. Many scholars for example tend to accept Herodotus’ lectures without scrutinizing the exact implications. Any idea that the written text exactly replicates a performance neglects what we know about the fluidity and immediacy of performance.

The oral prehistory of Greek prose has been relatively neglected, although the works of Aly early last century and of others like J.A.S. Evans, Honko, Lang, Murray, Siikala, Stadter, Thomas and Vansina on oral traditions and Herodotus in the last two decades or so have indicated there is more work to be done. In studying the beginnings of historical literature in the Greek world, our focus must be first on the development of the epic tradition and its fixation in written texts and more recently on the culture that lies behind the creation and performance of lyric poetry, elegy and history. Our vision of Herodotus has been transformed by the publication and analysis of the new Simonides poems, Honko’s and Siikala’s anthropological revisions of the meaning of tradition and of the social function played by a people’s notion of the past. As scholars used to books, we perhaps find it difficult to imagine the cultural world and the intellectual activity of people to whom books represented a very small part of their way of knowing the world and a relatively new way to communicate with others or to preserve one’s knowledge. Finland is renowned for research on oral traditions, on for example the *Kalevala*, research pioneered by Lauri Honko and carried on by Anna-Leena Siikala (Honko 1998 and 2000; Siikala 2000).

Honko saw the advent of a new paradigm in oral epic and oral prose research with an emphasis on multiple documentation using video, audio and still camera. Homeric scholars, such as John Foley and Minna Skafte Jensen, have worked closely with Honko and adapted his findings in Homeric studies. Honko took extended field trips to Northern Finland, Russian Karelia, Tanzania, China and India. In December 1990, together with his Finnish-Indian team, he recorded on video and audiotape a total of 15,683 lines of the epic performed by the singer and possession priest Gopala Naika. In 1998 this epic, only five lines shorter than the *Iliad*, was published in Tulu and English in two volumes, and a third volume *Textualizing the Siri Epics*, is an introduction to the methodology of the textualisation process of oral epics and oral history. It is no exaggeration to say that the Finnish school of folklore has completely outdated and expanded earlier work on oral epics and history. If Gopala Naika can

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remember eight days of narration, then Herodotus could have done the same.

Philip Stadter (1997) has compared Herodotus to the tale-tellers from the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina, where Council Harmon, David Hicks’ great-grandson, had an exceptional ability to recount tales, known to us as e.g. “Jack and the Beanstalk” and “Jack the Giantkiller.” Stadter notes that Appalachian speakers always adjusted their dialect both for comprehension and to appear more educated when performing for those outside their community. Ray Hicks, a descendant of David Hicks, alternates between the dialect “clumb” and the standard “climbed.” Some of the alternation of dialect forms in Herodotus, even in the written form may reflect this phenomenon. The audiences in Athens, Sparta, Corinth or Olympia, would be struck by the dialect of an Ionian speaker or writer. Stadter could imagine Herodotus dressing up as an Ionian or in full purple costume like Arion in full costume when in mainland Greece or wearing earrings and carrying a parasol as illustrated in Anacreontic vases, depicting Ionian dress. He could envisage mimicry in dialogue so that the different voices of Candaules, Gyges and Candaules’ wife, respectively overbearing and thoughtless, shocked and frightened, firm and in control, or of Solon and Croesus, would be essential parts of the performance.

Stadter believes that the written text of Herodotus still bears marks of oral performance in which the speaker clarifies, dramatises and interprets with his voice and body. Stadter thus represents an extreme form of the performative school.

13 Stadter even suggests venues: (1) The symposium as a venue for poetry and prose, cf. Aristophanes, Socrates, and Alcibiades in Pl. Symp. (2) The palaestra. Plato reports how Socrates on his return from Potidaea went to the palaestra of Taureus and was immediately questioned about the battle (Charm. 153a-d). (3) Private houses. Sophists were invited by Callias to perform in his house, according to Pl. Prot. In the Hip. mai., Hippias says that in two days he will give his narrative _epideixis_ of Nestor’s advice to Neoptolemus, at the _didaskaleion_ of Pheidostratus, where he had been invited by Eudicus (286a-b). (4) Festivals. The newly discovered historical elegy by Simonides most probably was composed for a festival at Plataea. Gatherings like the Eleutheria at Plataea, the Panathenaea at Athens, or the great pan-Hellenic festivals would have been natural occasions for prose narrative and sophists’ performances as well. In Plato (Hip. mai. 363d), Hippias states that he regularly presented himself at the Olympic festival. Many of Herodotus’ _logoi_ would lend themselves to presentation in a public gathering. (5) On campaign, with the army or the fleet. Herodotus may have accompanied the fleet to Egypt in the 450s, or Pericles’ expedition to the Black Sea in the 430s.
It is a platitude to say that Herodotus stands at the watershed between oral and literate phases of Greek culture. Many idiosyncrasies of his style suggest that he stands in a tradition of telling stories and that the written language in his time was only in its infancy. This is however debatable as others maintain that the written language was already fully fledged by Herodotus’ later life. Harris (1989) has coined the term “craftman’s literacy” for societies where the majority of people could barely write or read their name. Salmenkivi (2007b, 58f.) considers Harris to have over-reacted against the romantic notion that reading and writing was widespread in classical Greece and Rome. Harris admits himself that even if only 10% of the population in Archaic Greece had poor reading- and writing-skills, that would nevertheless represent a remarkable achievement of educational dissemination. The lack of any personal correspondence in the form of letters preserved up to the present day again does not disprove literacy since we only have letters from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt where weather conditions were favourable. The fact is that if 10-15% of the agrarian population could read and write, then a considerable proportion of Athenians would be able to read much more widely.

The Father of History, as Boedeker has it, is embroiled in paternity suits. He is both hailed as the single parent of a new genre and considered but one of many contributors to a variety of prose subgenres (Boedeker 2000, 97). He is charged with falsely claiming to report investigations into history and ethnography and yet is defended as the first serious researcher interested primarily in discovering facts about past human experience. He is portrayed as a transmitter of traditional cultural values conveyed in stories about the past but also described as struggling to master unwieldy traditions and to give them a stable form. As a native of Halicarnassus, as Pelling would have it, he stands on the front-line of the Greek engagement with the Other, geographically and culturally between East and West; part of what is being fought over in the history he narrates (Pelling 1997, 2). Rosalind Thomas considers that the proem or what Griffiths calls the “prospectus paragraph” and the opening chapters of Herodotus’ Histories seem to set out quite deliberately the Homeric precedent and the Homeric and mythical background only to overlay them with the new language of scientific research and intellectual enquiry—historie, apodexis and the language of knowledge (Griffiths 2006, 130 and above n. 5). This is a daring mixture of Homeric reference and hints of the current fashionable language of intellectual activity. This is not however to deny the clear

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Homer. echoes even in the form of Homeric structure like the catalogues of troops that follow in the rest of the Histories. The nature of Herodotus’ enquiry is thus set out with a hint of antithesis. This combination of the Homeric and the new is characteristic of the sophists who seem to have seen themselves as the direct successors of Homer, performing at the same festivals as the rhapsodes and even wearing the same purple robes.\textsuperscript{15} The combination then in Herodotus’ Histories of identifiably Homeric precedents and influence and the newer language of contemporary enquiry would seem far from diminishing the importance of either but to be characteristic precisely of a period in which the poets are giving way as foremost teachers to new generations of experts, “preachers,” persuaders, and the prose display piece for oral performance.

Rösler counters these arguments in addressing the question of the Histories and writing.\textsuperscript{16} He attempts to demonstrate that Herodotus started writing late in life and that several indicators, such as chronology, organisation of the material and commitment to legein ta legomena, show that Herodotus committed his thoughts to writing because he felt the need to give his knowledge an existence independent of his own and to preserve it for posterity. There he notes that Thucydides’ work is no longer addressed to an audience listening to a recitation, it is directed towards a future reader as “a possession for ever,” κτῆμα ζε αἰεί. According to Rösler this entails a crucial consequence in that the length of his Peloponnesian War is no longer dictated by the traditional constraints of a logos. Previously it had been an implicit rule that a written prose text, a syngraphe, was geared to the length of an oral logos. Had he actually been able to finish his work, it would have been somewhat longer than Herodotus’ Histories. As early as 1943 Harder had established the significance of the development of writing in the formation of Thucydides’ and Herodotus’ histories. In 1952 Turner further sketched in the details. Herodotus himself tells us of the Greeks’ adoption of the Phoenicians’ alphabet (Hdt. 5.58). According to Rösler, this led both writers to create a text of a length regulated by content and nothing but content, a text intended from the outset to reach readers beyond their time and age.

Thucydides expected (1.1) that the Peloponnesian war would be great and therefore more worthy of record than all previous wars. So he began taking notes as soon as the war broke out. Less clear is the connection between the outbreak of war and Herodotus’ decision to commit his

\textsuperscript{15} Johnson (1994, 252) emphasizes that the proem was not written with performance in mind.
\textsuperscript{16} Rösling 2002, 79-116; Raaflaub 2002, 149-86; Thomas, see n. 4 above and 2006, 60-75; Bakker 2002, 3-32 and 2006, 92-102.
history to writing. According to Rösler, Herodotus composed his *Histories* relatively late in life. It is reasonable to assume that he had been previously active as a *logographos* though there is actually no strict evidence for this. Lecture tours were nevertheless typical of that period. This is confirmed by Thucydides himself when he distances himself from the *logographoi*.

We may also in a wider context point to the lecturing activities of the sophists. Thucydides actually contrasts the quality of his own historiography with texts intended for oral delivery, such as *logographoi* compose. Oral delivery is angled not so much towards telling the truth as towards pleasing the audience and is targeted at the immediate effect on the audience, κτήμα τε ἐς αἱ ἀλλοι ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παρακρήμα ἀκούειν (Thuc. 1.22.4). The ephemeral character of logographic texts is highlighted by the verbal contrast παραρκήμα – κτήμα. At Herodotus' later stage of life in the colony of Thurii in Magna Graecia, he probably put lecturing behind him or might well have concluded that lecture tours would be difficult, if not impossible, in wartime conditions.

Here in Wrocław, which suffered as much as Coventry, Dresden or Rovaniemi from the Second World War bombing, it is perhaps worth emphasizing this fact. The wars with Persia were his topic but the Peloponnesian war was one factor that made the peripatetic lecturer’s career virtually impossible or at least more difficult to continue. However that may be, Herodotus certainly experienced the early years of the Peloponnesian War and much of the intellectual ferment of the Periclean and immediate post-Periclean years. We should expect these experiences to have left their mark in his work (Raaflaub 2002, 152f.).

So if lecturing tours were out of the question in wartime this could well have led him to a more fundamental reflection connected to his own passing years. As an oral historian, Herodotus had accumulated an exceptionally extensive knowledge, one which he alone possessed. He drew on his knowledge for his lectures. His knowledge had been built up by *historie* (inquiry), autopsy and interviews, largely during his numerous travels, often under difficult circumstances. Most of his knowledge was stored only in his memory. It might be an anachronism to picture Herodotus using written notes. He was entirely capable of relying on his memory as can be seen in the account of the pyramid of Cheops (Hdt. 2.125): "there is an inscription," he says, "recording in Egyptian characters

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17. See Wiseman 1997 for a modern parallel to *logographoi*.

18. Stadter postulates variation in lecture delivery to different audiences. This is countered by Harrison (2000, 2 n. 7) and Johnson (1995, 252). See n. 2 above.
how much has been spent on radishes, onions and garlic for the health of the workers.” He adds: “And as I well remember, the interpreter who read out the hieroglyphics told me that 1600 silver talents had been spent.” Röslings’s view is that the development from orality to literacy had reached the point at which a work like Herodotus’ histories could appear. He is not only the *pater historiae* but at the same time he (not Thucydides) gives birth to an entirely new medium: the massive text written for readers in the future.

The recitation of the entire *Histories* would take up fifty hours (Schöll 1855, 419; Flory 1980; Johnson 1994, 250f.). Schöll, Röslings and Johnson would consider such a recitation impossible though actually in India or Africa it would be possible, as we know from modern studies in oral epics and oral history. They also consider it equally improbable that the *Histories* were a collection of separate narratives for use in oral recitations. This leads on then to internal arguments from the overall design of the whole work where the work of Immerwahr is absolutely crucial and as always, we are all indebted to Jacoby for his perceptive comments in 1913. Jacoby introduced the idea of a scissors and paste job (“Arbeit mit der Schere”) where Herodotus tried to utilize everything that he had previously presented in lectures (“alles zu verwenden, was er bisher in Vorträgen geboten hatte”) and as far as possible to re-use his stock of lectures in their existing form (“den Bestand an Vorträgen möglichst in der vorhandenen Form zu verwerten”).

There is an ancient parallel for the scissors and paste procedure in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (278d), when Socrates caricatures the *syngrapheus* as someone who over a long time turns the text over and over, sticks bits together and separates them again (ἀνω κάτω στρέφων ἐν χρόνῳ, πρὸς ἄλληλα κολλῶν τε καὶ ἀφαιρῶν). Dorandi (1991) emphatically opposes the thought that Herodotus, as an oral historian, would ever have given readings exclusively from manuscripts. A closer parallel can perhaps be found in the Platonic Hippias’ account of his appearance at Olympia (Hip. mi. 363c-d): “when I go to Olympia for the festive assembly of the Greeks, whenever the Olympic Games takes place, I go from my homeland Elis to the sanctuary, and make an appearance there and give a talk as requested by one, from those that I have prepared for the show, or answer a question put by another…”


20 But see Lateiner 1989, 234 n. 15; Evans 1991, 89f. and ch. 3; Thomas 2002, ch. 8.
If one deviates from Jacoby’s hypothesis and postulates that the entire Histories was actually put into writing in Thurii, this would fit in with Lattimore’s observations concerning Herodotus’ “progressive style.” He points out that errors and incomplete references which Herodotus notices as he works on his text are corrected or completed at the very point which he just happens to have reached. In other words, they remain in the text, the text is not reworked over a long time (Lattimore 1958, 20). Along with the quite rare instances of unfulfilled announcements (e.g. Assyrioi logoi) this indicates a process of continuous writing pressing towards a conclusion. 21

The written text of the Histories contains only traces which can with due caution be used to reconstruct the oral Herodotus, according to Rösler. Johnson (1994, 230) puts it plainer: “Did Herodotus write his history with oral performance in mind? Such has been the almost universal assumption. The composition of the Histories should be seen as a late break with his past as an oral teller of tales. The entire material is organised along a main road (ὁδός), i.e. the conflict between Greeks and barbarians.”

De Jong analyses the narrative unity and the specific units involved in Herodotus’ histories (de Jong 2002, 245-66). She stresses at the outset that ancient literary taste shows a greater tolerance and appreciation of the episodic, the ecphrastic and the digressional. A central notion which recurs in ancient discussions of Herodotus is ποικιλία or variation. It is this variation that allows the author to insert a great deal of digressional material. The first to defend Herodotus after Jacoby was Aly whose interest in the folktale elements in Herodotus led him to suggest that the first five books are a frame narrative (Rahmenerzählung), a form that Herodotus derived from oriental, folktale literature (Aly 1921). He even put forward the provocative suggestion that the framed narratives (Jacoby’s “disruptive digressions”) were more important than the frame itself.

Pohlenz in 1937 identified a unifying subject, the confrontation between Greeks and barbarians, and actually suggested that Herodotus selects his material and that the digressions explain the main story and are not inserted at random, but at points where the main story needs them, i.e. when a new person or location has to be introduced.

The second turning point after Pohlenz is Immerwahr (1966). He detects both a subject (the history of Persian power and aggressiveness in a well-defined period in which aggression affected the Greeks) and a structure (the Histories consists of a series of logoi, narrative units which

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21 Hdt. 1.106.2 and 184. See Evans 1991, 89 n. 1 with refs there.
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are usually demarcated by ring-composition, which vary in length and which may themselves consist of smaller logoi). In Immerwahr’s analysis, the paratactic style has gained in power; it is not the product of an inquisitive but unstructured mind but rather a sophisticated literary and historiographical instrument.22 Immerwahr (1966, 306) saw the work as a single logos that has the form of a chain and embodies the single conception of the rise and fall of Asiatic power as the enemy and attacker of the Greek. De Jong cites and latches onto an insight from Waters (1985) who stressed that the Histories are a narrative in which the digressions become flashbacks just as in the structure of the Odyssey, not Exkurse as in Jacoby. De Jong (2002, 266) concludes that in the hands of Herodotus, the age-old story-teller’s device of the flashback or analepsis has become a powerful instrument of historical narration.

Several critics accept the idea of the unity of the written version of the Histories but still spot oral devices within the text. Mabel Lang expresses the matter very well: “Almost any reader of Herodotus’ Histories can be happily drawn along by the narrative flow without worrying much about where he is going. But every once in a while even the most casual reader will stop and ask, ‘How did we get from there to here?’” Lang (1984, 1) finds the answer in modern examples of oral narrative that are close to the kind of material found in Herodotus’ sources and by which his own narrative style must have been affected. Slings (2002, 53f.) wants to analyse academically the superficial impression of story-telling that lies behind Herodotus’ text. He uses discourse analysis of oral use of modern languages to compare with the quasi-spoken language preserved from Ancient Greek found in Herodotus. As a result, in my opinion, he brilliantly analyses the internal evidence for oral presentation of the Histories.

First the analysis from Lang. She speaks of arrows in the narrative that show the direction in which the story will move, and speaks of carrots by which the narrative is led in the desired direction. To quote: “Recognizing both the largely oral nature of Herodotus’ sources and as a result of his lectures, the likely oral manner of his composition, let us examine ways in which an oral narrative style may have influenced the history (that is

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22 Immerwahr 1966, 312: “The study of how Herodotus organises his material must be the main basis in answering many other questions which may be put to the work, such as its general purpose, the audience for which it was written, its sources, its reliability as a source, or the historiographic and philosophic principles embodied in it.” In a recent book, Greenwood and Irwin (2007, 43-6) have analysed how Herodotus links Books 4 and 5 and how seemingly insignificant logoi play a crucial role in this linking.
historicity) of Herodotus’ work” (Lang 1984, 5). She maintains that the student of Homer and the techniques of oral composition will spot inherited techniques of narrative style both producing the way in which the material was viewed and affecting the individual items and their relationships. These oral techniques are arrows or carrots or topic sentences that by giving direction and impetus make possible the inclusion of digressive material without causing either composer or audience to lose track. She believes that many of the cases of ring-composition should perhaps better be seen as a kind of spiralling forward, which de Jong in turn calls “prolepsis” or “flashforward.” She also lists flat spaces, that is intervals when the illusion of time passing is achieved by the insertion of filler material (e.g. 1.81-4). Another technique is that of hooks to connect marginally related passages, ranging from the μέν-δέ linking to planting in an earlier passage of a person or place so that his or her or its later and crucial appearance does not require a distracting explanation. Lang also draws attention to Herodotus’ use of verbs of learning, such as μανθάνω or πυνθάνομαι (‘to learn’ or ‘perceive’) in participial form or in a subordinate clause, to effect a transition from one state or action to another. Fifty examples of transition occur in Book 1 involving the verbs πυνθάνομαι, ἀκούω (‘to perceive, hear’), and a few examples with γιγνώσκω, οἶδα, ὠρᾶω, ἐπίσταμαι, (‘to recognize, know, see, understand’), as well as phrase like “it was reported that.” These are regular features of oral style. She then goes on to analyse speeches and small chunks of dialogue. Direct discourse and the dramatisation of personal interaction and confrontation are typical oral features.

Slings on the other hand talks about “downslip” which is how we ourselves break up sentences into simpler units and start again mid-sentence to pick up the thread (Slings 2002, 53-6). He admits that we cannot be native speakers of ancient Greek but that it is our duty as interpreters of Greek texts to come as close to them as possible by observing what goes on in natural language use in living languages. Slings analyses the story of Gyges and Candaules (Hdt. 1.8), splits it up into chunks and comments on them. He draws attention to repetition and to the use of the particle γάρ, which Herodotus uses more often than any other Greek author. Slings’ argument is very technical but in simple language he convincingly shows that Herodotus’ style is audience-oriented and makes great use of repetition which is a crucial condition for

23 Lang (1984, 154 n. 27) also notes the ubiquity of the γάρ (some 1479 instances in about 800 pages) which she sees as Herodotus’ readiness to explain. It also seems likely that this readiness is a result or in anticipation of audience reactions.
understanding a story about a brand-new discourse topic and a story with so many other discourse topics as well. Herodotus’ style, he argues, is such that he wishes to be readily understood by listeners as well as by readers.

Thomas and Raaflaub, writing almost simultaneously, however, have revolutionized our thinking about Herodotus and the sophists. They look at some of the characteristics of Herodotus’ polemical style, his penchant for criticizing others and the manner in which he goes about it; in particular his liking of the language of demonstration and proof, a demonstration in particular which in other contexts would be seen as the epitome of the epideictic style, his language of truth or more precisely “correctness,” the energetic and striking presence of his authorial views expressed in the first person. It is noticeable that these features tend to occur in clusters, along with the claims to have proofs. Herodotus’ claims to be able to prove his point also occur in the first person. They occur overwhelmingly in the geographical and ethnographical descriptions or at other points of controversy; for some reason it is his geographical and ethnographical enquiries rather than the sections of historical narrative where Herodotus seems more likely to slip into this kind of style. These characteristics seem to belong to the polemical style, the discourse of intellectual debate, often literally debate in public, in the latter part of the fifth century.

Their views, and those of e.g. Slings, are in direct opposition to those of Rösler who denies spoken or oral elements in the pages of the Histories.

Few historians, indeed few writers of any era, have been subjected to such widely divergent evaluations as Herodotus of Halicarnassus. A lot of the discussion (including the controversy between Nagy and Thomas) suffers from a fundamental and persistent ambiguity in the use of the term “oral” in that it refers both to the “mentality” or “conception” of a discourse (“oral” versus “literate”) and to its mode of presentation (“oral” versus “written”). The whole work—9 books or 28 scrolls—may well not have been designed for reading out loud or for recitation in public at one sitting.24 In his Budé editions of Herodotus, Legrand actually divided the Histories up into recitations but this has not been recognised as a true reflection of the author’s intention.25 I do however envisage with J.A.S.

24 See n. 19 above. This is the view of Flory (1980, 12-28) who argues that the length and coherence of Herodotus’ text make it impossible that he intended it to be recited either as a whole or in excerpt, and that therefore Herodotus’ audience was “a relatively small and elite audience of readers.”

25 Legrand 1955-1968; Flory 1980, 18 n. 21. If Cagnazzi’s (1975, 385-423) divisions or something like it is correct, this division arose only from the author’s practical need to begin a new roll. Griffiths (2006, 141) is sceptical about
Evans, Finnegan, Honko, Murray, Siikala and Vansina a Greece of the 5th century BC where both aoidoi were performing the Iliad, Odyssey and the epic cycle and separately logoi or logographoi where reciting local history as happens today in Africa or in India. Festivals for sports, dancing and culture, the gymnasia, symposia, private houses or army barracks would provide a forum for these recitals. For Herodotus these recitals of “snippets” of his work, to borrow Raaflaub’s term (2002, 163 n. 46) would belong to the earlier stage in his life, but after his trips to Egypt, the Greek islands, Mesopotamia and Susa inside the Persian Empire. With 300 years of written culture following Homer, the time became ripe as the Peloponnesian war broke out for Herodotus to create a more permanent history, which for him included anthropology, ethnology and geography—something which surely he had envisaged years and years earlier.26

Cagnazzi’s attempts, but he accepts the existence of smaller recitation-units and notes how Herodotus starts and ends a performance with a striking story.

26 I wish to stress that though my name is Evans, I am no relation to Sir Arthur Evans or to J.A.S. Evans who has written on the oral tradition in Herodotus.
On several occasions I have discussed the interpretation and problems of the ethnographic ideas and descriptions of Herodotus (e.g. in Karttunen 1989 and 2002). The Wroclaw meeting gave me the welcome occasion to consider the fate of his ideas later in the classical world.

The “Father of History,” as he was exaggeratedly styled by Cicero (Leg. 1.5), was also an important pioneer of classical ethnography. This was an essential part of his method of composing his history. After an introductory account of the early conflicts between Europe and Asia—as he himself defined it (1.1-5)—he proceeded to an extensive study of the more immediate backgrounds of the Persian wars. This involved a full account of the gradual development and growth of the Persian Empire into the massive—but still vulnerable—military mammoth met by the Spartans and Athenians in the 5th century. With many of the new conquests he found it useful for his purpose to give an account of the country conquered, of its geography and nature and of the history and customs of its inhabitants. This was useful not only for this particular phase of history, but also for the whole work: many of these conquered peoples later figured in the armies of Darius and Xerxes. Thus we have very full and valuable (though often also problematic) accounts of Mesopotamia (1.178-200), Egypt (the entire Book 2) and Thrace (5.3-10). However, from my point of view the accounts of the real eschatiai, the countries situated at the very

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1 Unfortunately, not of every one. We sadly miss e.g. an account of the “Upper Asia” conquered by Cyrus (Hdt. 1.177, cf. Karttunen 1989, 33).
rims of the inhabited world (\textit{oikoumene}), are more interesting. They include Aethiopia\textsuperscript{2} (3.17-25), India (3.98-106), Arabia (3.107-13, cf. 3.8f.), and the remote parts of Scythia (4.25-36) and Libya (4.181-96). In a few scattered notes he confessed his ignorance of the European \textit{eschatiai} (3.115f., also briefly in 4.45; 2.33 and 5.9f.).

Herodotus the Historian was well known and much read and eagerly discussed over many centuries. Sometimes the criticism was too harsh (one readily remembers Plutarch), but his continuing importance cannot be questioned. In a way common in ancient historiography, he was often expressly criticized just to show the independence of an author who would silently use him in many other passages (thus e.g. by Aristotle). Herodotus himself used this method with Hecataeus, although his dependence on the elder logograph has occasionally been exaggerated. For the history of the Persian wars he was and has remained the leading authority in spite of frequent criticism,\textsuperscript{3} and his methodical and stylistic influence was immense.

With Herodotus the Ethnographer the situation was somewhat different. After Alexander’s conquests and the spread of Hellenism, the Greek knowledge of the world widely surpassed the rather narrow scope of Herodotus. Now there were eye-witness accounts even for many of the \textit{eschatiai}—such as Sogdiana and North-West India—while Egypt and Mesopotamia were already parts of the familiar world. For the fame of Herodotus, this meant a switch from what was considered a more or less reliable description of various countries into a source of ethnographic curiosities. I shall now consider this development in the light of a few examples.\textsuperscript{4}

Alexander had probably no need to resort to Herodotus in order to get information about the Persian Empire, which was familiar enough in his times, but when he reached the Hindukush and proceeded to Sogdiana and

\textsuperscript{2} In the classical context I prefer the form Aethiopia in order to avoid a too obvious connection with modern Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{3} See e.g. Murray 1972. Josephus, \textit{C. Ap.} 1.16 said that all were attacking Herodotus for lying. On Herodotus and Hecataeus, see Karttunen 1989, 69ff. The humanists of the Renaissance often took this kind of criticism quite literally, and it was left to Henricus Stephanus to restore the fame of Herodotus in his apology. On the history of the later reception and study of Hdt., see Rollinger in Bichler and Rollinger 2000, 109ff.

\textsuperscript{4} Certain caution is needed in comparisons. With less knowledge of ancient India, one could easily see the account of burned widows (\textit{sati}) in Alexander’s histories as a reminiscence of a similar account in Thrace (cf. Karttunen 2002, 474).
India, the situation changed. The fragments of the works written by his companions indicate that Herodotus was read, indeed, and verification was sought for some of the curious details he told. Some were also included afterwards, when the accounts of the campaign were written, such as in the Onesicritean episode of the meeting with the Amazones. The gold-digging ants of Herodotus reappear in Nearchus (FGrHist 133 F 8), who boldly claimed to have seen their skins, which were brought to the camp of Alexander, with his own eyes.

We can follow the history of the gold-digging ants a little further. Megasthenes (FGrHist 715 F 23) probably commented on them because they already were part of the literature on Alexander’s campaigns. He located them in the country of Derdae, long ago identified with the Daradas of Sanskrit sources. Their country, modern Dardistan, had indeed been producing gold since hoary antiquity, but the methods were probably more conventional than those described by Herodotus. Certainly ants were not involved.

Gold-digging ants had a long life in later literature: Callimachus fr. 202 may have some source other than Herodotus as he calls these ants winged. Strabo 15.1.37 is perhaps derived from the histories of Alexander, while Strabo 15.1.44 and Arrian Ind. 15 contain the above-mentioned fragments of Nearchus and Megasthenes. Mela’s account (3.7), too, is given in the context of other marvels mentioned in the histories of Alexander.

Dio Chrysostomus (Or. 35.18-24) composed an Indian utopia derived from information culled from Herodotus, Ctesias and Alexander’s historians, and in this Indian ants larger than foxes appear in the last two passages. They do burrow gold sand, as in Herodotus, but Dio omits the curious way of securing the gold with the help of camels. Propertius (3.13.5) knew that “Inda cavis aurum mittit formica metallis.” Pliny (NH

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5 Onesicritus, FGrHist 134 T 8 and F 1 (in Plutarch), also Cleitarchus, FGrHist 137 F 15f. et al., cf. Hdt. 4.110-7.
6 Hdt. 3.102-5; for the question of their identity, see Karttunen 1989, 171ff. with a discussion of many earlier studies.
7 See also Puskás 1978. For Megasthenes, see Stein 1932, 237ff.
8 Cf. e.g. Sophocles fr. 29 Radt (26 Nauck). Both Sophocles and Callimachus probably refer to Aethiopia instead of the India of Herodotus. An attempt at a natural explanation for the ferocious giant ants was apparently made by Agatharchides (FGrHist 86 F 70ab), claiming that in Aethiopia lions are called ants. In Africa the ants were also located by Solinus 30.23.
9 Giant serpents, cotton and giant reeds. Cotton and giant reeds were also known to Hdt. (3.106 and 98), but Mela’s combination rather indicates a later source. But also Herodotus was used by Mela soon after this in 3.7, discussed below.
11.111) has horned ants digging gold. Lucian (Gallus 16 and Saturnalia 24) briefly mentions the gold-digging ants, both passages perhaps going back directly to Herodotus, as we shall soon note other Herodotean reminiscences in his works (see also Karttunen 2004). Aelian (NA 3.4) curiously connects these ants with the Issedones (below). Finally, they appear in Tzetzes (Epist. 83) and Isidorus (Etym. 16.15.7: “India ubi formicae erunt aurum”), and thus were carried into the Medieval tradition (Gregor 1964, 64f.).

It seems quite clear that Nearchus used Herodotus, perhaps even had his book with him during the campaign itself. A returning theme is his comparison of India with Egypt, and here Herodotus served as the main source.10 His account of the cotton dress of the Indians (FGrHist 133 F 11) is perhaps related to the short account of Herodotus (3.106), and his description of the Gedrosian desert (F 1) has parallels in the Herodotean accounts of Arabia and Aethiopia. It is quite possible that the name given to the fish-eaters of the Gedrosian Coast—Ichthyophagi—was taken from Herodotus, who had them by the Red Sea (3.9, but note also 3.98 on Indians who eat raw fish). We meet again both kinds of Ichthyophagi in Agatharchides (FGrHist 86 F 31ab).11

In a general way, Megasthenes could also belong to the Herodotean ethnographic tradition through Hecataeus of Abdera and his book on Egypt. It has been suggested that this work, in many ways dependent on Herodotus, perhaps served as the model for Megasthenes when he wrote his own book on India.12 But there also seems to be more Herodotean material in Megasthenes. Bosworth (1996, 121) suggested that he formed after Herodotus his description of the wide conquests of Sesostris (Hdt. 2.103, also used by Hecataeus of Abdera) and Idanthyrsus (4.76; 4.120; 4.126f.).13 In F 21 Megasthenes described a winged snake of India. As it is

10 Nearchus, FGrHist 133 F 17 (in Strabo 15.1.16), comparing the Indus to the Nile and naming Herodotus as his source. See Herodotus on the Nile in 2.5 and 10. Cf. Murray 1972, 205.
11 Longo 1987 has some interesting notes about the Ichthyophagi, but he fails to notice Hdt. 3.9 and gives the tradition a double origin with Nearchus and Agatharchides.
12 On Hecataeus, see Murray 1970, on his relation to Megasthenes, Murray 1972, 207f. and more elaborately Zambrini 1982-85. However, Bosworth 1996 disagrees with Murray and Zambrini, dating Megasthenes’ diplomatic mission to around 320-318 and the publication of the Indica to around 310. This makes him too early to be influenced by Hecataeus.
13 However, as was rightly noted by Bosworth, Hdt. did not make this adversary of Darius a world conqueror. I suspect that the much earlier Scythic conquest
unknown both in Indian nature and mythology, it is perhaps an offspring of the winged snake of Arabia of Herodotus (2.75 and 3.107 ff.).

Barbarous peoples killing and even eating their aged parents reappear often in Herodotus. They include the Indian Callatians (3.38) and Padaeans (3.99), the Massagetae in North-Eastern Iran (1.216) and the Issedones living in farthest Scythia (4.26). Common man-eaters were the Scythian Androphanos in 4.106, again met in Pliny (NH 7.11). Cannibalism has fascinated the human mind throughout history, usually as the most repulsive custom and the most controversial to the ways of ordered society. There are some real cases of documented ceremonial anthropophagy, but many accounts were just invented or at least exaggerated. Quite often cannibalism has been ascribed to enemies, to distant barbarians and to other suspicious groups (such as the Jews in Medieval Europe), usually without any ground. For Herodotus, this was also the most extreme case of the relativity of morals, which was one of his favourite ideas. It was also reflected in later literature.14

In Megasthenes (FGrHist 715 F 27b) we find a cannibal race living in the Indian Caucasus (see below). In Strabo (11.11.8) the Derbices of the Caucasus (Hindukush) kill and eat everyone over 70, but as the name Derbices was used by Ctesias, the passage is only secondarily connected with Herodotus. However, the fragments of Ctesias do not mention them as cannibals. Just before this the same passage of Strabo mentions a barbarous tribe who used to lament every newborn babe, thinking about all the sorrows it will meet in life. Strabo mentions Euripides as a source, but the idea is actually found in Herodotus’ account of the Thracian Trausoi (5.4; cf. Stein 1932, 238ff.). Tibullus (4.1.145, quoted in my title) mentioned the Herodotean Padaeans in the farthest East. Pliny (NH 6.55) mentioned the anthropophagous Indian Casiri living close to Scythia. Strabo also mentioned cannibal habits in connection with Hibernia (Iērnis); the local people were said to devour their dead fathers (4.5.4; in Mela 3.6 they are just barbarians).

The Issedones or Essedones15 figure in later lists of Scythian peoples, often in South Russia (e.g. Pliny NH 4.88 and 6.21), in the north of Iran (Pliny 6.50, with Massagetae) or even in Central Asia (Ptolemy 6.15f.,

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14 The morals of anthropophagy were discussed by Cynics (see Rankin 1969). Pliny (NH 7.9) pointed out that human sacrifice comes close to eating people.

15 They were apparently mentioned before Herodotus by Alcman (in Steph. Byz.), Aristeas of Proconnesus (see Bolton 1962) and Hecataeus (FGrHist 1 F 193 from the same passage of Stephanus).
with the town Issedon). Aelian (NA 3.4) knew them as the neighbours of the gold-digging ants, but unfortunately the rest of the passage is lost. This tradition also continued to the Middle Ages.16

With Issedones go the one-eyed Arimaspoi, who steal gold from griffins (Hdt. 3.116 and 4.27). The story probably originated with the “shamanistic” epic of Aristeas of Proconnessus, although griffins as fabulous birds have a long prehistory in ancient Near Eastern art, e.g. in Egypt and Mesopotamia. An independent version of the griffins was given by Ctesias,17 and sometimes it is difficult to say with the later accounts of griffins whether they were derived from Herodotus or Ctesias. Pliny (NH 7.10), at least, names both Herodotus and Aristeas as his sources. After the account of Isidorus (Etym. 14.3.7: “[India...] ibi sunt et montes aurei, quos adire propter dracones et gryphes et immensorum hominum monstra impossibile est”) the griffins continued their popularity in Medieval literature.18

Another typical form of extreme barbarism in the eyes of the Greeks was to have sex in public. Often this motif goes together with cannibalism. Herodotus briefly mentioned public sex in 1.203 for a people living in the Caucasus Mountains, west of Caspian, and again in 3.101 for an Indian tribe (see also 4.180 on Libyan Auses). In Alexander’s time Macedonian geographical speculation extended the name of Caucasus to comprise the Hindukush Mountains in modern Afghanistan. Consequently, Megasthenes (FGrHist 715 F 27b) located the people practising sex in public in this Indian Caucasus (the very same tribe as the cannibals mentioned above). Strabo’s Hibernians, too, had sex in public and—another sexual taboo—even with their mothers and sisters (Strabo 4.5.4).

A parallel to griffins and the method used by Arimaspeans for obtaining gold from them is the account of the “Rukh” bird of Arabia (as it was later called) and the method of obtaining cinnamon (Hdt. 3.111).

16 Gregor 1964, 35 notes interesting Medieval developments of the motif. In the Epistle of Prester John the Indian cannibals are identified with Gog and Magog, while Vincent of Beauvais (Vincentius Bellovacensis, Speculum historiale 31.11) claims that the Tartars who were slain by Prester John afterwards attacked these cannibals.


18 See Gregor 1964, 63ff. for examples and references. The late γ recension of Pseudo-Callisthenes (2.41) and Archipresbyter Leo’s Latin version ascribed to Alexander an aerial venture in a car drawn by griffins (Gregor 1964, 26). One-eyed Arimaspi were also mentioned by Ammianus (23.6.13).