

Hilmar Klinkott and Norbert Kramer, eds., *Zwischen Assur und Athen: Altorientalisches in den Historien Herodots (SpielRäume der Antike 4)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag. 2017. ISBN 978-3-515-11743-2. Pp. 243, € 49, also available as e-book ISBN 978-3-515-11752-4.

To assess the value of Herodotus' *Histories* as a source for the reconstruction of historical events and the Greek idea of the "Eastern other" is no easy task and is always linked to the vexed question of the work's veracity. This in itself could be the focal point of an excessive scholarly debate. The way Hilmar Klinkott's (Kiel) and Norbert Kramer's (Heidelberg) book discusses the topic is a fresh impetus to the recent academic discourse about the *Histories*, which is not insisting unyieldingly on mostly square positivistic discussion about the Halicarnassian's work. This is usually spun around the questions about the reliability of the author's statements and/or the origin and characters of his "sources". The book is the proceedings of a series of lectures held at the University of Heidelberg, themed as discussions about the presence of ancient Near Eastern motives and elements within the *Histories*. Most of the contributors chose to discuss influences of "Eastern" elements by focusing on specific Herodotean episodes. Therefore, the book aims to be an "*interdisziplinäre(r) Stellenkommentierung*" (p. 8). This approach is beneficial as it certainly avoids false generalizations about the *Histories* as a whole and matches the recent trends of research in this subject.¹ Because of the companion's focus, the contributions mainly bring Herodotus' accounts about the Persian empire, Persians and Medes into focus.

In a few words the introduction (pp. 7–10) mentions the most important academic works concerning the discussion of the dichotomous perception of Herodotus as literate, historian or as "proto-historian" in the scholarly debate of the last 30 years. The book's first article by Robert Rollinger is an investigation about Oebares and the neighing horse, by giving a contextualization and a close examination about a detail within the scope of the account of Darius I's accession to the throne, which hardly received attention so far (pp. 13–42). Rollinger provides at first a structural analysis of Hdt. 3.84–9 and then continues to work out the episode's broad cultural background by bringing Urartian, Mesopotamian and Persian sources into consideration. The author further concludes that Herodotus at first introduced a monument in his account about the establishment of the Achaemenid rule and dynasty to give his story more credibility. Second, the story about a groom, who assists the king to embrace his kingship is an ancient Near Eastern circulating motive and was transformed by Herodotus in a new way. Hence Herodotus was aware of ancient Near Eastern motives but used them for questioning the legitimacy of Darius

¹ For example: Elizabeth Irwin and Thomas Harrison, eds., *The Past in the Present: Interpreting Herodotus after Charles W. Fornara*. Oxford 2018. Boris Dunsch and Kai Ruffing (eds.), *Herodots Quellen – Die Quellen Herodots / Herodotus and his Sources* (Classica et Orientalia 6). Wiesbaden 2014. Elizabeth Irwin and Emily Greenwood (eds.), *Reading Herodotus: A Study of the logoi in Book 5 of Herodotus' Histories*. Cambridge 2007.

I's kingship. The book's second contribution, by Anthony Ellis, deals with the question about Herodotus' use of the terms Persians, Barbarians and Medes as ethnonyms in a mainly intertextual discourse (pp. 45–59). The author's aim is to give subtle nuances to already existing scholarly statements about the apparent interchangeability of those three ethnonyms in the *Histories* and also alleged culturally determined funerary customs. Ellis' conclusion contends that Herodotus modifies and accommodates ethnonyms and conceptual systems to make his Greek audience understand his auctorial purposes. The third contribution by Hilmar Klinkott is questioning Xerxes I's strategy for action and understanding of his role as an Achaemenid king by focusing on the contexts of beheading and impalement, which Herodotus presents as "Asiatic" forms of physical violence (pp. 61–81). Klinkott puts emphasis on the volatile contexts of these acts of physical violence for the legitimation of Xerxes I as victorious great king. Aside from the knowledgeable investigation, this article provides inferences about a possible political opposition against Xerxes led by the magnate Masistes, because of the context of impalement as punishment for revolt against the great king. Hence, Klinkott's paper provides new insights on Xerxes' court milieu during his campaign against Hellas by discussing the great king's representation of power as a warning to potential opponents.² Norbert Kramer's paper discusses the transformation and function of ancient Near Eastern motives of warfare in the *Histories* by selecting sieges, emigration caused by Persian campaigns against Ionian cities, deportation, the staging of the Achaemenid army and cruelty (pp. 83–104). Besides outcomes about detailed questions on Persian warfare, Kramer highlights the link between an alleged "exodus" of the citizens of Phokaia and Teos with the master-narrative of the "great Greek colonization". Through this, the literary creativity of Herodotus once more is brought up into discussion. The book's fourth contribution by Julia Lougovaya-Ast provides a specification on inscriptions as sources for Herodotus and how the author makes use of them for his historical narrative (pp. 105–121). The author offers a methodological frame work by differing between Herodotus' accounts about the person and his motives to set up an inscription and the account according to the inscription as medium. Her result is that structural divergences between the inscriptions' versions of an account versus those appertaining contexts can be noticed (p. 115).³ Dennis Möhlmann analyses the episode of Cyrus II crossing the river Araxes (Hdt. 1.205) by pointing out the ancient Near Eastern pioneering techniques and their associated presentation of power (pp.

² Other studies which are not cited therein but support Klinkott's view are Gundula Schwinghammer, "Die Smerdis Story – Der Usurpator, Dareios und die Bestrafung der ‚Lügenkönige‘", in: Robert Rollinger, Brigitte Truschneegg and Reinhold Bichler, eds., *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich – Herodotus and the Persian Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 3), Wiesbaden 2011. 665–687 and Karen Radner, "High visibility punishment and deterrent: impalement in Assyrian warfare and legal practice", *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 21 (2015), pp. 103–128.

³ Alternative scholarly opinions can be found in recent works about other inscriptions mentioned by Herodotus, cf. Valeria Sergueenkova, Felipe Rojas, "Asianics in Relief: Making Sense of Bronze and Iron Age Monuments in Classical Anatolia", *The Classical Journal* 112, 2 (2016–2017), pp. 140–178.

123–144). According to Möhlmann Cyrus used a ship-bridge with defended tower-ships to start his campaign against the Massagetae. Based on the detailed analysis of coherent narrative structures in the *Histories*, Möhlmann further highlighted the connections between Cyrus' crossing of the Araxes and Darius I' and Xerxes I's crossings of the Hellespont. Monika Schuol's article includes research on the comparability of Herodotus' depiction of Scythian customs, by giving an overview on recent archaeological findings (pp. 145–162). The main results are that many of the Scythian customs in the way Herodotus describes them are proven in the archaeological records of modern days South-Russian territories. Nevertheless, Schuol emphasizes that the Scythians, neither in the *Histories* nor in the archaeological records, do not share a homogenous cultural background. The author further concludes that in Herodotus' account different traditions can be detected and that this can be seen as the reason why the archaeological records over such wide spread regions in some cases very well match with the Halicarnassian's accounts. Andreas Schwab's piece concerns itself with the presence of Achaemenid royal ideology based on the great kings' royal inscriptions written in Old Persian (pp. 163–195). Schwab's methodological access is remarkable, because he proved Herodotus' knowledge of decisive elements of the royal Achaemenid ideology like the concept of *drauga-* ("lie" in Old Persian) through textual comparisons. In addition, he shows the concentration of these elements in Xerxes I's council before waging war against Hellas (Hdt. 7.8–11). The companion's last contribution by Kai Trampedach deals with the role of the Magi as priests and diviners in the Median and Persian societies according to Herodotus. Trampedach underlines the enormous difference between the relations of a Greek office-holder and Greek diviners and "Asiatic" rulers with their subordinates. This is based on Trampedach's examination of the Magi as supporters of the Persian kings' negative connoted ambitions, while their Greek pendants are advocating the good cause. Hence a dichotomy between Western and Eastern diviners and their relations to office-holders occurs in the *Histories*.

In summary, the companion of Klinkott and Kramer captivates the reader, because all the articles underline the creative power of Herodotus as author of the most coherent Greek account about the history of the Ancient Near East. If we situate this book within the scholarly debate about the *Histories* it can be viewed as a heir to Immerwahr's, Erbse's and Bichler's narrative analyses, which highlighted the complexity of Herodotus' content.⁴ Therefore, the book can be recommended for everyone working on the *Histories* or on the ancient Greek perception of the ancient Near East. All the contributors lay emphasis on the intertextual embeddedness of the episodes discussed by them, providing the reader insights into the literary dimension of the *Histories*. On the other hand, not all the companion's contributions deal with

⁴ Henry R. Immerwahr, *Form and thought in Herodotus* (Philological monographs, 23), Cleveland, OH 1966. Hartmut Erbse, *Studien zum Verständnis Herodots* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 38), Berlin 1992; Reinhold Bichler, *Herodots Welt: Der Aufbau der Historie am Bild der fremden Länder und Völker, und ihrer Geschichte* (Antike in der Moderne), Berlin 2000.

the presence of ancient Near Eastern motives and elements in the sense of a true interdisciplinary approach between Iranists and Assyriologists on the one side and ancient historians and classicists on the other. Sometimes the reader misses a contextualization of specific episodes in a broader ancient Near Eastern context, for example nearly all the contributions neglect the Babylonian sources and traditions, except Rollinger's article.⁵ Especially the last mentioned contribution and these of Klinkott and Schwab illustrate how insightful an interdisciplinary approach to Herodotus can be, if one uses the sources from "East" and "West" to highlight the complexity of the *Histories'* accounts.

Overall, the book itself can be highly recommended as its contributions stress that the use of non-Greek sources helps to gain a deeper understanding of the literary dimension of Herodotus' accounts about the ancient Near East. This can be seen as a landmark publication and it would be beneficial, if further investigations about Herodotus like this one follow.

JULIAN DEGEN
INSTITUT FÜR ALTE GESCHICHTE UND ALTORIENTALISTIK
LEOPOLD-FRANZENS UNIVERSITÄT INNSBRUCK
ATRIUM-ZENTRUM FÜR ALTE KULTUREN
LANGER WEG 11
6020-INNSBRUCK
julian.degen@uibk.ac.at

⁵ It also matters which version of the trilingual royal Achaemenid inscriptions is used for arguments, because not only their motives but also their audiences are different. Cf. Jan Tavernier, "The Use of Languages on the Various Levels of Administration in the Achaemenid Empire", in: Bruno Jacobs, Wouter F.M. Henkelman and Matthew W. Stolper, eds., *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich – Administration in the Achaemenid Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 18). Wiesbaden 2017, pp. 337–412, esp. 382.