HERODOTUS' STARTING-POINT

M. E. White

Professor Grube has for some years past taught a course of which the *Histories* of Herodotus formed a part. I hope, therefore, that he will be interested in the problem I wish to raise, since it is a problem for all readers of Herodotus, ancient and modern, who begin to read his *Histories* as he wrote them from the first book onwards. How did Herodotus construct an intelligible framework for his narrative of the Persian Wars and his account of the antecedents of the protagonists in that struggle, both Greek and barbarian, and in particular why did he begin the detailed narrative where he did, with the reign of the Lydian king Kroisos?

Several recent critical studies have been concerned with the first question, and it is fortunately no longer necessary to defend Herodotus against the charge of being incompetent or casual in dealing either with the complexity of his varied materials or with the chronological structure of the *Histories*.[1] His data have been checked against external evidence: Oriental primary sources such as Assyrian records, the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Behistun inscription; eclipses and other such phenomena mentioned by him and now dated by astronomers' calculations; Greek epigraphical sources such as the Athenian archon list, early ostraka, and dedications; archaeological corroboration from, for example, pottery, grave deposits, early buildings and statues, bronzes, ivories, or coins, for such events as the foundation dates of colonies; later chronographers, compilations; and so forth. As a result of this extensive and meticulous re-examination, advances have been made in understanding the chronology particularly of the period from the eighth to the end of

[1]K. Von Fritz, *Die Griechische Geschichtsschreibung* 1 (Berlin 1967) Chapter 5, 104–475, with the accompanying *Anmerkungsband* 79–214, is the most comprehensive recent study. Sections A and E respectively deal with theories of composition and literary sources, two important topics which I omit as largely irrelevant to my subject; they give full discussion and bibliography. H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (APA Monograph 23, Cleveland 1966) deals with literary structure. For the chronological structure see, e.g., H. Strasburger, "Herodots Zeitrechnung," *Historia* 5 (1956) 129–161; N. G. L. Hammond, "Studies in Greek Chronology of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries b.c.," *Historia* 4 (1955) 371–411. These four works will be cited hereafter by short titles. M. Miller, "The Earlier Persian Dates in Herodotus," *Klio* 37 (1959) 29–52, "The Herodotean Croesus," *Klio* 41 (1963) 58–94, and "Herodotus as Chronographer," *Klio* 46 (1965) 109–128, examines Herodotus' data in relation to oriental source material and that found in later chronographers, and in the third article is concerned with genealogical computations; most readers will have serious reservations about some of the theories advanced and the resulting reconstructions of Herodotus' chronology of certain events.

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the sixth centuries.[2] The dates that can be established from external
sources have been compared and combined with the less precise indica-
tions of time which were all that Herodotus had at his disposal for the
period earlier than the latter half of the sixth century—e.g., the sequence
of events within a reign of known duration, intervals of x years or x
generations between two events, or synchronisms between important
events. Indeed the limitations imposed by the nature of the source
material available to Herodotus and other early historians have been
recognized, as also the difficulty Herodotus faced in attempting an enquiry
far-ranging in both time and space when there was no universally accepted
era date by which the separate chronologies of oriental monarchies or
Greek city-states could be interrelated. Herodotus drew mainly upon
ἀκοή, oral tradition, and ὄψις, visual testimony, that is what he himself
saw or could learn from other eyewitnesses. He spent his life travelling,
questioning, observing; he listened to men of all walks of life: the political
leaders of the Greek cities where he resided or visited, learned men like
the priests in Egypt and the custodians of famous oracles, scientists, philo-
sophers and poets; the gossip of the market-place and harbour, travellers'
tales, and the reminiscences of old soldiers—in a word everything he
could collect. This is the method of the modern anthropologist and socio-
logist and it was also the only method for the historian before the days
of copious written records. Oriental chronicles and documents existed
but he could not read them and had to accept what his informants told
him they contained. There were some Greek records and he does mention
especially dedications fairly frequently. But for the other kinds of docu-
ments which a historian might be expected to use, lists of magistrates,
decrees, treaties, and the like, very few inscribed copies of such docu-
ments from the centuries before the fifth are extant, and the existence
of significant numbers of them on permanent or perishable materials
available for a researcher like Herodotus to consult is doubtful.[3] Even
Thucydides writing about a period for which much more "documentary"
evidence was available makes what seems to us surprisingly little use of
it; he like Herodotus accepted oral tradition and visual testimony as
the primary stuff of history, but with this difference, that for his main
subject he confined himself to contemporary military and political history
where he could apply much stricter standards to his evidence and where
the chronological problem was much simpler. When he deals with earlier
events his method is similar to that of Herodotus. For example, he refers

[2]It would be tedious to attempt to give examples; the extent of the work done may
be seen in the references compiled by Professor von Fritz (*op. cit.*) *Anmerskungsband*
esp. pp. 101–214, See also the surveys: W. Krause, "Herodot," *AnzAlt* 14 (1961)
25–58; P. MacKendrick, "Herodotus 1954–1963," *CW* 56 (1963) 269–275.
    [3]See L. H. Jeffery, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) for a substantial
selection of the materials from the archaic period that have survived.

to the archonship of the younger Peisistratos and mentions his two dedications, the altar of the Twelve Gods, and the altar of the Pythian Apollo quoting its inscription, but he uses the archonship not as a date, but as an illustration of Peisistratid policy.[4] Both historians assumed that their readers knew when such important events occurred.

The retentiveness and reliability of oral memory has been underestimated by some modern historians who have doubted that the substantial accuracy of the chronological knowledge in Herodotus and Thucydides about, e.g., the time of colonial foundations or the intervals between events was possible without contemporary *written* records. They have assumed chronological records—lists of magistrates, kings, victors, or priests—kept by Greek states from as early as the eighth century. The further assumption is made that "Herodotus and Thucydides had at their disposal a far greater number of dated events than they included in their histories."[5] These "pre-literary" Greek chronological records, as Jacoby describes them, are unprovable assumptions since no remains exist, and they are unlikely for many reasons.[6] The few early documents we know (either from inscriptions or literary reference)—treaties, decrees, law codes, dedications—bear no internal date by an eponymous magistrate or the like, but the date has to be deduced from the content, contemporary circumstances, letter forms, or other datable archaeological material found with them. Even Attic decrees do not regularly include the name of the archon until the last quarter of the fifth century.[7] How-

[4]Thuc. 6.54.6-7.

[5]Hammond, "Studies," 390–392. I do not disagree with his contention that Herodotus was not "inventing" his chronological information, but only with his assertion that it was based on documentary materials and "dated" from chronological records kept as far back as the eighth century.

[6]F. Jacoby, *Atthis* (Oxford 1949) esp. Chapter 3, 149–225, and notes, pp. 327–398, treats this problem in detail. He does not preclude the possibility of lists of officials, magistrates, or priests, being kept in some form in public or temple records from the sixth century, and of family records of the same period. It lies outside the scope of this paper to discuss the dates of the first literary local chronicles, the materials from which they were compiled, and when and how the first complete lists of magistrates, priests, victors, etc., were drawn up. Jacoby puts the earliest Ionian examples of local chronicles not before 450/40 B.C.; see *ibid.* 178-185 with notes for a brief discussion.

Similarly I omit any discussion of whence and how Thucydides arrived at the intervals of years between events he assigns in Book 1.12 and 13, and in Book 6.2-5 for the Sicilian colonies. For the latter see K. J. Dover, *Thucydides Book VI* (Oxford 1965) Commentary 2–5; we await his fuller treatment in the next volume of the *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*.

[7]M. B. Wallace has drawn to my attention what is probably the earliest extant inscription with an archon dating. It is a series of laws from Eretria, inscribed 550–525 B.C. For the texts, photographs, and discussion see E. Vanderpool and W. P. Wallace, "The Sixth Century Laws from Eretria," *Hesperia* 33 (1964) 381–391, Plates 67–69. For the practice in Attic decrees, R. Meiggs, "The Dating of Fifth-Century Attic Inscriptions," *JHS* 86 (1966) 86–87.

ever the strongest reason for doubting the existence, or at any rate the availability, of such systematic lists is the chronological structure of Herodotus' *Histories* which we shall be examining. Thucydides' practice also in the Archaeology and Pentekontaëtia would be surprising if the use of an Athenian archon list had become common by the time he was writing.

Approximately the first half of the *Histories*, the narrative to the end of the Scythian Expedition at 5.27, is concerned with the rise and extension of the Persian Empire from the time of Kyros' defeat of Kroisos to the beginning of the Persian expeditions against Greece, and with the Greek states who were involved from time to time in this process of expansion. In these books Herodotus has collected, ordered, and recorded the vast amount of material he amassed in his research (ἱστορίη) into the history, customs, geography, and antiquities of barbarian and Greek states. The chronological framework is the successive reigns of the Persian kings from Kyros to Dareios, the lengths of which he gives at the death of each one: Kyros 29 years (1.214.2), Kambyses 7 years and 5 months (3.66.2), the pretender Smerdis 7 months (3.67.2), and Dareios 36 years (7.4). The first book, to which we shall return, is the most complex because in it he must launch the subject, introduce the chief participants, and start the sequence of the Persian kings by explaining how Kyros came to the throne of Media-Persia, defeated the Lydians, and thereafter made the Greek cities, which had been subjects of Lydia, his subjects. These books are not annalistic in the sense that Herodotus could fix events to the years of a reign. Events follow in order with pauses for geographic and ethnological description,[8] and, more important, with episodes often fairly sizeable from the history of the Greek states.[9] It is Herodotus' custom to insert these sections at points of synchronism, starting back in each excursus as far as he can with relevant earlier history and tracing it to the moment from which he began, then continuing with the main narrative. He is able thus to maintain the chronological structure, while at the same time inter-relating events in the Greek world with each other and with the external world of the non-Greek Aegean powers. Whenever possible he gives time intervals in terms of generations or numbers of years; more often, however, the synchronism and interrelations are the significant clues for chronological reconstruction. Because the scope in time and space is so broad, so many strands have to be interwoven, and so much of the Greek material is episodic and disconnected, these books at first reading

[8]Book 2 is the longest such description; other substantial examples are 1.131–140 (on Persia), 1.178–187 (on Babylon), 4.1–82 (on Scythia), 4.168–199 (on Libya).

[9]E.g., 1.59–65.1 (on the rise of Peisistratos in Athens); 1.65–68.6 (on Spartan early history); 1.142–150 (on the Ionian, Aeolian, and Dorian cities of Asia Minor); 3.39–60 and 120–125 (on Polykrates of Samos); 4.145–167 (on Cyrene).

may seem diffuse. As Professor Immerwahr has remarked: "Both in antiquity and in modern times readers have thought of it as a fascinating conglomeration of disparate stories, judgments and insights, based on the excitement of marvel (*thôma*), and on a love of detail for its own sake."[10] It is only Herodotus' skill that makes it seem so effortless: in fact the whole structure is highly organized, although it did not and could not have the precise chronology which a universally accepted calendar with an era date would permit, and modern readers expect.

In the second half, from the beginning of the revolt of Naxos (5.28) to the end,[11] the structure tightens, the focus of action shifts to Greece itself, and the narrative is concentrated on the final stages of the conflict between Persia and Greece and moves forward rapidly, with fewer pauses and insertions, through the campaigns of the Ionian Revolt, Marathon, and the two years of Xerxes' great expedition. It is generally agreed that the year of Salamis (480 B.C.) is the base date used by Herodotus, that he worked back from this in his preliminary research to the attack on Naxos (500/499 B.C.) in the year before the outbreak of the Ionian Revolt, and then as he wrote worked forward marking all the intervals carefully and precisely in what is a year-by-year account of events from 500/499 to 479/8 B.C.[12] The more detailed chronology of this later half of the *Histories* is related to the earlier half at Book 7.4 by the mention of the death of Dareios after thirty-six years of rule. Dareios' death was in 486/5 (the year after the revolt of Egypt, which occurred in the fourth year after Marathon in 7.1.3, i.e., by the usual Greek inclusive reckoning in 487/6). From this synchronism Herodotus could work back through the regnal years of the Persian kings to Kyros (1.214.3) and beyond that to the Median kings as far back as Deiokes (1.102.1).[13]

[10]H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought* 325; see Chapter 3, 79–149 for a detailed analysis of the formal structure. F. Jacoby's tabulation of the structure in his article "Herodotos" in *RE*, Suppl. 2 (1913) = *Griechische Historiker* (Stuttgart 1956) 283–326 shows the intricate plan of each book.

[11]Jacoby, *Griechische Historiker* 352 ff.

[12]For the details of this year-by-year account see Strasburger, "Zeitrechnung," 151–154, and Hammond, "Studies," 385–388, although Strasburger (135, n. 3) does not accept—nor can I—Hammond's hypothesis that Herodotus here reckoned by Athenian archon-years rather than by seasonal years. The one slip in the account has been frequently noted: it is at 6.95.1 and 2, where προτέρῳ ἔτει in Section 1 refers to Dareios' order to prepare horse-transports, and in Section 2 to the disaster at Mt. Athos. By Herodotus' own earlier narrative these two events were not in the same year, since he marks the transition from one year to the next at 6.46: 6.44. 2–3 puts the disaster at Mt. Athos in 492/1, 6.48 puts the order for horse-transport in the next year 491/90, along with Thasos and the trouble over the Aiginetan hostages, and at 6.95 where the Marathon campaign begins Herodotus has reached 490/89 B.C.

[13]Strasburger, "Zeitrechnung," 138–139 suggests that the synchronisms between the Kimmerian and Scythian invasions and the two Lydian kings, Ardys (1.15) and

Professor Strasburger believed that Herodotus used the year of Salamis as the base date ("Schlüsselpunkt") for his chronology because it was in a sense documentary, "absolut fixiert," by the archon-dating for Xerxes' arrival in Athens shortly before Salamis (Καλλιάδεω ἄρχοντος, 8.51.1).[14] It is here that I disagree. Herodotus did not need to "date" Salamis, and did not do so, in the sense that a modern historian dates: the year of Salamis was "absolut fixiert" simply because his readers knew when it had happened, and he could take that knowledge for granted. The name of the archon when Xerxes arrived in Athens was one of the well-remembered details of the story of the capture and burning of the Acropolis in 8.51–55. Book 7 and the early part of Book 8 had recounted the campaigns of Thermopylai and Artemision earlier in that same summer. Surely Herodotus' Athenian readers, some of whom or some of whose relatives had fought during that momentous year, did not require the mention of the archon's name to ascertain when these battles were fought, any more than they needed it for Salamis. In other words, the archon's name for an event within their memory was not a date but part of the oral tradition about the event, and it did not make more precise what they could place without need of demonstration. Herodotus could and did assume a high degree of chronological memory about important events from the last decades of the sixth century on-wards;[15] and about so important an event as the year of Xerxes' invasion he could assume exact memory, so that he could use it as the base date for his whole account of both Dareios' and Xerxes' invasions. It is not usually remarked that Thucydides too assumed similar chronological memory for such events as the end of the tyranny, Marathon, and Xerxes' invasions. No more than Herodotus did he think that he should begin references to them by any kind of dating.[16]

Kyaxares (1.103), and the Egyptian Psammetichos (1.105.5) provide the connexion between the Median-Persian and the Lydian and Egyptian king lists.

[14]"Zeitrechnung," 135–136.

[15]To take only one example, at 5.55 on the occasion of Aristagoras' visit to Athens to secure help for the Ionian Revolt in the winter of 499/8, he inserts the account of Hipparchos' murder, the expulsion of Hippias, Kleisthenes' struggle with Isagoras and Kleomenes, the conference to restore Hippias and his subsequent retirement to Sardis, down to the Persian ultimatum in 5.96, where he comes full circle back to Aristagoras' visit in 5.97.1 with the explanation that Aristagoras hoped to get aid because the Athenians had as a result of his preceding narrative come into bad odour with the Persians. In this long excursus, he assumes knowledge of the year of Hippias' expulsion, works back to the murder of Hipparchos four years before (5.55), and at 5.66 works forward again through the succeeding episodes.

[16]In his account of the end of the tyranny (6.54–49), the interval between the expulsion of Hippias and Marathon is mentioned only at the end, and even there it is not an exact figure but the round number of twenty years; see K. J. Dover, *Thucydides Book VI* (Oxford 1965) 68. Similarly it is only at the end of the Pentekontaëtia that he men-

Granted that Herodotus took Salamis as his base date for the narra-
tive back to the beginning of the Ionian Revolt, and that the framework
of the earlier part of the *Histories* was the successive reigns of Kyros,
Kambyses, and Dareios—at whose death he synchronized the two
structures and could work back by lengths of reigns to Kyros and even
earlier to Deiokes—we come back to the question I posed at the be-
ginning. How did he solve the writer's problem of where to start his
history? His readers could not be expected to read backwards. He must
begin with an epoch-making event of Aegean history close enough in
time and vividly enough remembered that he could be assured that they
would know with reasonable certainty how long before their own day
it had occurred. Only so would his narrative be intelligible. He selected
the fall of Kroisos three generations before his own day, the event that
first brought Greeks and Persians face to face. By describing it in full
and dramatic detail with its antecedent and concomitant actions, he
was able to plunge directly into his subject at a moment of crisis when
his readers knew that their futures had become involved. He wastes
little time in introduction. Chapters 1–5 mention, only to reject, the
alleged mythical origins of the East–West conflict, the legendary rapes
of Io, Europe, Medea, and Helen. The preface is not merely amusing:
it concludes with the remark that he will not enquire further into such
stories but will proceed at once to point out the person "whom I myself
know to have been the first to inflict injuries on the Greeks" (1.5.3).
This clear distinction between the mythical and the historical, the
legendary and the real, marks the beginning of historical enquiry as we
know it.[17]

Then in Chapter 6 we read: "Kroisos son of Alyattes, a Lydian, was
lord of the nations west of the Halys." This bald statement is a much
more remarkable assumption about the chronological knowledge that
oral tradition could be expected to supply than the example of Salamis
so much nearer in time. Herodotus took it for granted that his readers
knew who Kroisos was and when he fell, so that the story of his fall
could be his starting-point; from it he could work back and forth through
the complex structure of the first book, in which he introduced the main
protagonists and the main themes of conquest, *hybris*, expansion, and
Greek resistance that would dominate his *Histories*. Commentators have
expressed surprise at what is described as the "displacement" or "trans-
position" of the Kroisos story to the beginning from what might be

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tions, again in round figures, the interval between the beginning of the Peloponnesian
War and the withdrawal of Xerxes as ἐν ἔτεσι πεντηκόντα μάλιστα (1.118.2). In 1.18.
1–2, and 23, the end of the tyranny, Marathon, and τὸ Μηδικόν are all mentioned in
the confident assumption that no "datings" are required.
[17]A. D. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London 1966) 114.

thought of as its proper place in the campaign of Kyros.[18] There is no
displacement: Herodotus did not know in what year of Kyros Kroisos
was defeated,[19] but even if he had, I doubt that he would have begun
with Kyros' rise to power and recounted the defeat of Kroisos at the
proper place. He could rely only on oral memory for his starting-point,
and to avoid confusion it was essential that he begin with what was
well known and also significant to his Greek readers. Kroisos was the
familiar figure with whom the Greeks had dealings;[20] Kyros was unknown
to them until he conquered Kroisos, and his antecedents were important
only in retrospect. It is true that at 5.65.3 it is possible to calculate his
date for Kroisos' fall from the thirty-six years of Peisistratid tyranny
lasting from Peisistratos' victory at Pallene, about two years before
Kroisos' defeat, to the expulsion of Hippias in 511/10 B.C. But Herodotus
did not expect his readers to remain in uncertainty about his starting-
point until they reached the middle of the fifth book.

The structure of Book 1 demonstrates Herodotus' skill in working
back and forth from his central focus. After introducing Kroisos he
immediately goes back to the beginnings of his dynasty and relates the
story of how the first of his family Gyges seized the Lydian kingship
from the last king of the previous Heraklid dynasty, Kandaules or
Myrsilos, and slew him. Kroisos' untimely end is hinted at in Chapter 13
by the Pythia's warning that in the fifth generation from Gyges vengeance
will come for the murder, and there is also a hint of the *hybris* that will
contribute to that end in Gyges' contemptuous disregard of the prophecy.
The reigns of Gyges, Ardys, Sadyattes, and Alyattes are briefly sketched,
emphasizing their relations with the Greek cities, and for each the length
of the reign is stated. By Chapter 26 we have returned to Kroisos who
mounted the throne when he was thirty-five years old, and whose con-

[18]E.g., Immerwahr, *Form and Thought* 24, 41. J. E. Powell, *The History of Hero-
dotus* (Cambridge 1939) 9–16, regarded its present position at the beginning as one
of the revisions Herodotus made when he adapted an original "Persian History" to be
the first part of the present work.

[19]Strasburger, "Zeitrechnung," 137–140 points this out, and indeed the date of the
fall of Sardis is one of the most embarrassing uncertainties of this period. For the Hero-
dotean dating of it see H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays on Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 166,
n. 3: for the Greek chronographers' date of 546/5 and the "supposed evidence" of the
Marmor Parium for 541/40, G. V. Sumner has a valuable discussion in "Problems in
the Aristotelian 'ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ,'" *CQ* n.s. 11 (1961) 42–43, n. 4.

[20]Pindar, *Pyth.* 1.94 and Bacchylides 3.23–62, and also the Louvre amphora showing
him on the funeral pyre (Beazley, *ARV*[2] 1.238) confirm that Kroisos was a familiar
figure to fifth-century Greeks. Similarly Herodotus' full treatment of Gyges assumes
a vivid oral tradition about him; cf. Archilochos Fr. 22 (Diehl) and perhaps the frag-
ments of a play on the Gyges' story, if Lobel dates it correctly to the first half of the
fifth century; E. Lobel, "A Greek Historical Drama," *Proceedings of the British Academy*
35 (1950) 207–216. I am grateful to H. J. Mason for these references.

quest of the Greek cities is described. When he was at the height of his prosperity Solon visited him to warn him that no man should call himself happy until his life was over (1.29–33), and a second dreadful warning was given him when his beloved son Atys was killed accidentally by Adrastos, a man polluted by blood guilt to whom he had given refuge (34–44). At this point Kroisos receives the news that Kyros the Persian has seized the throne of Media-Persia from his brother-in-law Astyages, and he must decide whether he should attack Kyros to check his growing power. The testing of the oracles follows, the sending of gifts, and the consultations of Delphi (46–55). On Delphi's advice that he ally himself with the strongest of the Greeks, he sent the embassies to Athens (59–64) and to Sparta (65–68). At this synchronism Herodotus inserts his accounts of Peisistratos' first attempts at tyranny and final success at Pallene,[21] and the excursus on Spartan history to explain Sparta's present favourable position. In Chapter 69 we return to the main action: Kroisos makes his alliance with Sparta and launches his attack on Kyros by an invasion of Cappadocia. After the first year of indecisive fighting, Kroisos dismisses his army with orders to reassemble in the spring, Kyros attacks unexpectedly in the late autumn, the Spartans fail to appear because of their war with Argos which is decided by the Battle of the Champions, Sardis falls, and Kroisos is captured. His miraculous escape from the funeral pyre, and Delphi's defence of its oracles against his complaint that he had been misled, conclude the Kroisos-*logos* at Chapter 92.

There is then a pause in the narrative which emphasizes that the fall of Kroisos is a turning point in Greek fortunes, and that now they will be face to face with a more relentless foe, the new conqueror Kyros. Chapters 93–140 deal with Lydian monuments and customs, the rise of Media under Deiokes and his successors down to Astyages whom Kyros deposed, Kyros' birth and the attempts to destroy him, his successful revolt and seizure of the throne of Media-Persia, and an excursus on Persian customs. This section provides the transition from Lydia to Persia and from Kroisos to Kyros, the man with whom the Greeks will hereafter have to deal. Using what we have come to see is his usual technique, Herodotus has inserted the earlier history of the new power at the relevant point, the moment when Kyros emerges as victor. By Chapter 141 we have come full circle to that moment, when Kyros' next task will be to bring Kroisos' Greek subjects on the Asia

[21]It is worth noting that Herodotus' continuous narrative of Athenian history begins with this excursus. His references to Solon suggest the sage and traveller rather than the political reformer, and from the pre-Solonian period he knows only isolated incidents such as the Kylonian conspiracy and the early Aiginetan wars. It seems that oral memory could not supply a continuous narrative further back than three generations.

Minor seaboard under his control. Again Herodotus goes back to describe the origins of these Greek cities—the early migrations of the Greeks and the foundation of the three groups, the Panionion of twelve cities, the Aeolian eleven, and the Dorian Pentapolis (142–151). Kyros had invited the Greeks to join him against Kroisos but they had refused. Now they tried to avoid forcible conquest by a voluntary submission but received Kyros' ominous answer of the fable of the piper and the fishes: "Cease your dancing now, as you did not choose to come and dance when I piped to you." On this reply they sent for help to Sparta, who dispatched one penteconter with the message that Kyros was not to molest any city of Greece since they would not allow it. Kyros' reply was: "Who are the Spartans? . . . If I live, they will have troubles enough of their own to talk of without concerning themselves about the Ionians." This anecdote is a deliberate forewarning of the dangers from Persia threatening not only the Asiatic cities but Greece itself.

Kyros left the conquest of the Greek cities to his generals, returning to Ecbatana to prepare his assault upon Babylon. Chapters 154–176 describe its implacable execution by Harpagos, in the face of spirited Greek resistance. The remainder of the book (177–216) is taken up with the conquest of Babylon, which includes a vivid description of the walls and city, the defences and bridges along the Euphrates built by Queen Nitocris, and an account of Babylonian customs, and it concludes with Kyros' death during his mysterious last campaign which Herodotus says was against the Massagetae north of the Caspian Sea.

This is the way Herodotus began his *Histories*. The Kroisos story is the focus—a tragic drama of human greatness and fall and an event of crucial historical importance, the approximate time of which his readers knew by oral memory without need of demonstration. At appropriate stages of the action are inserted sections of the earlier history of the participants; the descriptive sections provide pauses at transitions in the narrative; the primarily Hellenic interest of the whole is made clear by the constant interaction between Greek and barbarian and the preservation of a nice balance between the amounts of material on eacn; and through it all, in parable or anecdote or narrative, Herodotus comments on the nature of the human situation and the historical process. If one asks where else he could have launched his subject, how else his chronological sequence could be made intelligible to his readers, it is not easy to find an answer.

TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO