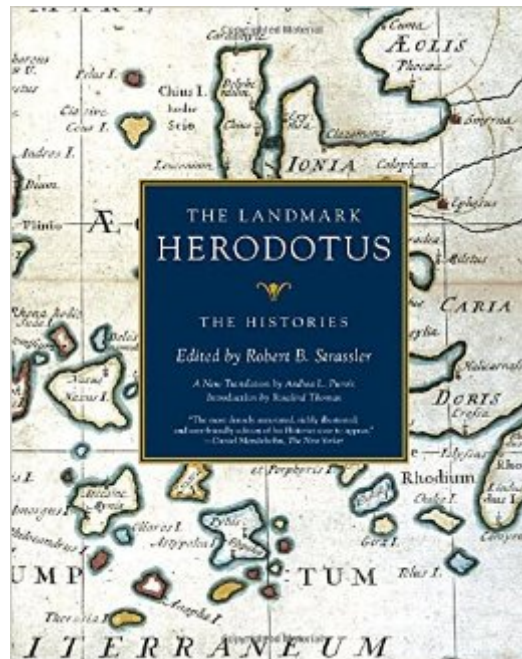




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The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories



Synopsis

From the editor of the widely praised *The Landmark Thucydides*, a new Landmark Edition of *The Histories* by Herodotus. Cicero called Herodotus "the father of history," and his only work, *The Histories*, is considered the first true piece of historical writing in Western literature. With lucid prose, Herodotus's account of the rise of the Persian Empire and its dramatic war with the Greek city states set a standard for narrative nonfiction that continues to this day. Illustrated, annotated, and filled with maps, with an introduction by Rosalind Thomas, twenty-one appendices written by scholars at the top of their fields, and a new translation by Andrea L. Purvis, *The Landmark Herodotus* is a stunning edition of the greatest classical work of history ever written.

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Customer Reviews

Bob Strassler, a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Business School, where he was a Baker Scholar, is the president of Riverside Capital Management Corp., and an unaffiliated scholar whose articles have appeared in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*. He received an honorary degree as Doctor of Humanities and Letters from Bard College in 1996. A viola da gamba musician, he is the chairman of the Aston Magna Foundation for Music and the Humanities. Andrea L. Purvis received her Ph.D. in Classical Studies from Duke University in 1998 and teaches in Duke University's Department of Classical Studies.

Chapter 1 Herodotus of Halicarnassusa here presents his research so that human events do not fade with time. May the great and wonderful deeds some brought forth by the Hellenes,

others by the barbarians – not go unsung; as well as the causes that led them to make war on each other. Persian authorities of the past claim that the Phoenicians were responsible for the dispute. This is because, after they had come to and settled the land which they still inhabit from what is now called the Erythraean Sea, they at once undertook long sea voyages and brought back cargo from Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere, but more to the point, they came to Argos. At this time in the land we now call Hellas, Argos surpassed other places in all things, and when the Phoenicians reached Argos they set out their cargo for sale. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival, when they had sold almost everything, many women came down to the sea, in particular, the king's daughter. Her name, according to what the Hellenes also say, was Io daughter of Inachos. The women were standing by the stern of the ship intent upon their purchases when the Phoenicians, inciting each other, rushed upon them. The greater part made their escape, but some were seized and carried off. Io herself was among the captives. The Phoenicians put the women on board their vessel and set sail for Egypt. This is how Io came to Egypt according to the Persians (though the Hellenes disagree), and this was the very beginning of grievances. They say that following these events, certain Hellenes whose names they cannot specify came to the port of Tyre, in Phoenicia, and abducted the king's daughter Europa. These Hellenes would be Cretans. And now the score was even. But after this, the Hellenes were responsible for a second crime. For they sailed in a warship to Aia in the territory of Colchis and on to the River Phasis. And when they had finished the business that brought them there, they abducted the king's daughter Medea. So the Colchian king sent a messenger to Hellas to demand satisfaction for the abduction and the return of his daughter. The reply was that, since they had received no satisfaction for the abduction of Io of Argos, neither would they pay anything to them. They say that in the generation following these events Alexandros son of Priamos heard the stories and wanted to abduct a wife from Hellas for himself, quite confident that he would pay no penalty since the other side had not paid either. And so he abducted Helen. The Hellenes decided that the first thing to do was to send messengers demanding the return of Helen and satisfaction for the abduction. When they made these proposals they were charged with the abduction of Medea, and besides, they said, how could they expect satisfaction from others when they themselves had neither paid nor surrendered her upon request? Up to this point, there had been abductions only from each other, but after this the Hellenes were largely responsible for offenses. For they began to make war on Asia before their enemies made war on Europe. Now the Persians think that the abduction of women is certainly an act only unjust men would perform, and yet once they have been abducted, it is senseless to make a fuss over seeking vengeance. It is the way of sensible people to have no concern for abducted women; it is

quite obvious that the women would not have been abducted if they had not been compliant. The Persians claim that while they themselves, Asiatics, thought nothing of the women being abducted, the Hellenes of Sparta, for the sake of a woman, mustered a huge expedition, went to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam. From that time on they have considered the Hellenes to be their enemies. For the Persians assume Asia and the barbarian tribes living there as their own, and anything Hellenic is separate and divergent from themselves. The Persians claim that this is how it happened, and they find in the sack of Troya the origin of their hostility toward the Hellenes. But the Phoenicians disagree with the Persians about Io. They say that it was not by abduction that they brought her to Egypt, but rather that she had intercourse with the captain of the ship in Argos, and when she realized she was pregnant, she was ashamed to face her parents and she voluntarily sailed away with the Phoenicians so that she would not be found out. These are the stories told by the Persians and Phoenicians. I myself have no intention of affirming that these events occurred thus or otherwise. But I do know who was the first man to begin unjust acts against the Hellenes. I shall describe him and then proceed with the rest of my story recounting cities both lesser and greater, since many of those that were great long ago have become inferior, and some that are great in my own time were inferior before. And so, resting on my knowledge that human prosperity never remains constant, I shall make mention of both without discrimination. Croesus was of Lydiana ancestry, the son of Alyattes, and the ruler of the peoples this side of the River Halys (which flows from the south between the Syrians and Paphlagonians, then goes toward the north and empties into the sea called the Euxine). Now Croesus was the first barbarian known to us who subjugated and demanded tribute from some Hellenes, although he made friends with others. He subjugated the Ionians, the Aeolians, and the Asian Dorians, and made friends with the Spartans. Before the reign of Croesus, all Hellenes had been free. There had been an invasion by Cimmerians into Ionia prior to Croesus, but this was not for the subjugation of cities, but rather a raid for plunder. The rule passed from the Heraklids to the family of Croesus, called the Mermnads, in the following way. There was a man named Kandaules, known to Hellenes as Myrsilos; he was the monarcha of Sardisb and the descendant of Alkaios son of Herakles. The first of the Heraklids to become king of Sardis was Agron son of Ninos, who was the son of Belos, who was the son of Alkaios. Kandaules son of Myrsos was the last. The kings who ruled this land before Agron were descendants of Lydus son of Atys, from whom the whole Lydian people derives its name; earlier they had been called Meionian. From these Lydians, the Heraklids were entrusted with the rule, obtaining it through the sanction of an oracle. The Heraklids were descendants of a slave-woman of Iardanos and Herakles. They governed for twenty-two generations, 505 years, handing down the rule from father to son until

it reached Kandaules son of Myrsos. Now this Kandaules fell in love with his own wife and, being in love, thought he had the most beautiful of all women. Therefore, he used to tell his favorite among his bodyguards, Gyges son of Daskylos, not only about serious matters but [especially] about the beauty of his wife, and with extravagant praise. It was fated that things would turn out badly for Kandaules, and so this had not gone on long when he said to Gyges, Ἄλλῃ ἢ ὅτι “Since I don’t think you believe me, Gyges, when I tell you about my wife’s beauty (and it just so happens that people believe their ears less than their eyes), I am asking you to do something to make sure you see her naked.” Gyges responded with a sharp cry and said, Ἄλλῃ ἢ ὅτι “My Lord, what are you saying? Insanity! You order me to see your mistress naked? When a woman’s dress is removed, so is her dignity. People long ago recognized what principles are noble and good, and we should learn from them. Among them is this one: Ἄλλῃ ἢ ὅτι “Look only at what belongs to you. I do believe that she is the most beautiful of all women, and I beg you not to ask for what is against all decency.” Gyges said such things to thwart the king’s desire, dreading the thought of how badly things could turn out for him because of this. Then Kandaules replied, Ἄλλῃ ἢ ὅτι “Don’t worry, Gyges, and don’t be afraid of me or my wife; I didn’t tell you this to test you, and no harm will come to you from her. I have a plan and will make sure she has no idea you’re watching her. I will position you in the bedroom behind the open door. After I come in, my wife, too, will be there to go to bed. Next to the doorway is a chair. She will set each of her garments on it one by one as she takes them off, and you may watch unobserved. But when she walks from the chair to the bed and her back is turned, be careful she doesn’t see you and then you can go out through the door.” Since Gyges could not escape, he was won over. And when Kandaules thought it was bedtime, he led Gyges to the room, where before long the queen entered. While she came in and set down her garments, Gyges watched. And when she went toward the bed with her back turned, he slipped out from behind the door and went out. But the woman spied him as he left and, realizing that this was her husband’s doing, she neither cried out, even though she felt shamed, nor let on that she knew, since she intended to get even with Kandaules. For among the Lydians, as well as nearly all other barbarians, it is a great disgrace for even a male to be seen naked. Thus she revealed nothing and remained silent for the time being. But as soon as day dawned, she prepared her most faithful servants for what she intended and had Gyges summoned. He came at her request, assuming she knew nothing of what went on, just as he had always come to the queen whenever she had summoned him before. When he arrived, she said, Ἄλλῃ ἢ ὅτι “Now, Gyges, there are two roads before you, and I shall let you choose which you want to take. Either kill Kandaules and have

me and the kingdom of the Lydians, or you yourself must die at once so that in the future you will never see things you should not see in your complete obedience to Kandaules. At any rate, either he should die, since he planned the deed, or you should, since you saw me naked, which violated all decency. At first Gyges was dumbstruck by what he heard; then he begged her not to force him to make such a choice. Nevertheless, he could not persuade her, and when he saw that he really was confronted with the necessity to kill his master or to be killed by others, he decided that he would survive. He asked her, "Since you are compelling me to slay my master, please tell me how we are going to assault him." "The attack will be made from the very place he revealed me naked," she replied, "and the assault will be made upon him in his sleep." Together they worked out the plan, and when night fell for Gyges was not getting out of this; there was no escape either he or Kandaules had to die. Gyges followed the woman to the bedroom. She gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door. Then, when Kandaules was sleeping, Gyges crept up, slew him, and obtained the woman and the kingdom. It is this Gyges that the poet Archilochus of Paros, who lived at the same time, mentions in his verses. Gyges was supported in obtaining the kingdom by an oracle from Delphi. For the Lydians thought that what had happened to Kandaules was dreadful and were up in arms. However, the partisans of Gyges and the rest of the Lydians came to an agreement: if the oracle declared him king, he would be king; if not, he would return the rule to the Heraklids. The oracle did in fact declare for him, and thus Gyges became king. But the Pythia added this: retribution would come from the Heraklids to the fourth descendant of Gyges. The Lydians and their kings disregarded this part of the oracle until it actually came to pass. Thus the Mermnads obtained the kingship by taking it from the Heraklids. When Gyges became king, he sent quite a few dedications off to Delphi, and of all the silver dedications in Delphi, most are his. Besides silver, he dedicated an unbelievable amount of gold. Most worthy of mention among them are the bowls; six golden bowls are his offerings; they weigh thirty talents and stand in the treasury of the Corinthians, although the truth is that it is not the treasury of all the Corinthians, but of Kypselos son of Eetion. Of all barbarians known to us, it was Gyges who first dedicated offerings to Delphi, after Midas son of Gordias, the king of Phrygia. Midas in fact dedicated a royal throne worth seeing, on which he sat when he gave judgments. This throne sits in the same place as Gyges' bowls. The gold and silver dedicated by Gyges is called "Gygian" by the Delphians, named after its dedicator. After Gyges had gained control of the government, he led his army in an invasion of Miletus and Smyrna, and he took Colophon. But since no other great deed was done by him during his kingship of thirty-eight years, we shall bypass it, having mentioned so much

already. But I will mention Ardys son of Gyges, who became king after him. It was this man who took Prienea and invaded Miletus. While he was ruling in Sardis, the Cimmerians, expelled from their homeland by Scythian nomads, came into Asiae and took all of Sardis with the exception of the acropolis. When Ardys had been king for forty-nine years, Sadyattes son of Ardys succeeded him and ruled as king for twelve years, followed by Alyattes son of Sadyattes. This king made war on Cyaxares, the descendant of Deiokes, and on his army of Medes. He drove the Cimmerians out of Asia, took Smyrna (a colony founded from Colophon), and invaded Klazomenai. From the latter he did not come away as he wished but suffered a great defeat.

Herodotus is FUN to read. He is thought of as the Father of History and this important book demonstrates what our first historian attempted to do. It is full of wonderful stories that may or may not be true, but Herodotus did his best to confirm oral accounts from all sides. The Landmark edition (and this is true of the other Landmark volumes too) is all you could want, with maps and footnotes that keep you clear about the places Herodotus wrote about. There is a series of essays as appendices on topics in Greek life that are extremely useful. This book was Herodotus' effort to establish the cause of the Persian Wars with Greece. (He thinks Croesus was the cause.) His thesis has been re-visited and challenged, but it is still one of the major sources of information about Greece and the Mediterranean (as well as Egypt and northern Africa) in the 5th century BC and before.

Herodotus with "training wheels." Yes, but so what? I purchased Thucydides, Xenophon, and Arrian after reading this Landmark book. Simply awesome. The Landmark series is not to be missed. Histories is a foundation of history and literature and this series makes it easier to understand with notes, maps, and appendices (worth the price for that alone.)

Herodotus "invented" history by traveling and interviewing different peoples in order to put on record their histories and cultures. Before him, history is known through archaeological works such as inscriptions on monuments, government records, etc., and the Hebrew Scriptures. For the first time, Herodotus recorded history as we understand it today, which makes his work the earliest record of ancient traditions and culture. Being curious about the ways of life of different countries, his book sometimes feels like an ancient version of the Discovery Channel. His work is as full of Geography and Ethnography as it is historical content. He is open minded but judicious, so what you read is just this treasure chest of everything ancient. Much of the book focuses on the founding and expansion

of the Persian Empire. Whenever the Persians encounter a new nation, he gives its history and a description of its culture. He focuses a lot on Egypt and Scythia, but also writes about Babylon, Assyria, India, and all other peoples at the time. Since the Persians conquered or fought just about every civilized nation of their time, you get a tour of the known inhabited world of ~500 B.C and see how it came under Persian influence. The culmination is an epic narrative of the Greco-Persian Wars, which is when Persia makes its move on Greece, and which include the famous battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis. These wars would determine whether Greece became a nation of slaves or a nation of intelligent men and women that defines Western civilization to this day. The Landmark edition is something else. You can't go ten pages without at least one excellent map (usually several). There are pictures of artifacts, ruins, and even aerial views of legendary battlefields. The appendices really put the work into context and IMO the 21 of them together make up a book within a book that teaches a lot about ancient history. The introduction and appendices also explain just how important this book is; Herodotus was the first to record history, so his information on Greece and the rest of the world is really the definitive source for a lot of what he talks about.

This review will rate "The Landmark Herodotus" in two ways. First, it will review this particular edition, and second, it will review the Histories of Herodotus itself. I give five stars to this edition of Herodotus. I cannot imagine reading any other edition of Herodotus; after looking through several other translations and editions, this one exceeds them all in many respects. The first and most relevant addition is the inclusion of maps every few pages. Herodotus mentions many different places in his work and unless you're a professor of Greek history, you won't know all of them. Every location that is known to modern scholars is plotted on the maps. Best of all, each map focuses on the places mentioned in the pages preceding it. That way the maps aren't cluttered, making it difficult to find a place that you've read about (unlike almost every other Greek history book available). Andrea Purvis's translation is excellent. It is clear, easy to understand, and uses 20th century English, unlike many of the other translations available which use old-fashioned and pretentious language. The appendices are very helpful and worth reading as you move through the book. They help to pull together many aspects of Herodotus's work. I also give five stars to the Histories of Herodotus as a work in its own right. What Herodotus has to say is interesting and hugely relevant to ancient history. Herodotus has many detractors who say that he was not as critical of his sources as he ought to have been. I disagree. Herodotus repeatedly gives several viewpoints for an issue and then explains why he thinks that one of them is the best. For example,

he gives numerous theories for why the Nile floods in the summertime and then explains why he thinks one of them is true. Herodotus does claim that many of the oracles are credible and occasionally gives supernatural explanations to historical events (for example, the Greek victories at Plataea and Mycale). His reliance on the supernatural, however, is sensible or even progressive when compared with his contemporaries. Is he as empirically-minded as Thucydides? Perhaps not, but Herodotus's work does seem to suffer less from personal bias than Thucydides' "The Peloponnesian War". I fully recommend "The Landmark Herodotus" to anyone interested in Greek or Persian history or reading one of the classics of world literature.

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