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HERODOTUS AND HIS 'SOURCES'

Citation, Invention and Narrative Art

DETLEV FEHLING

Translated from the German by J. G. Howie

FRANCIS CAIRNS

elements in the argumentation. This is particularly true of Chapter Two, which in its whole mode of expression is geared to readers already convinced by much of Chapter One and is no longer concerned with argumentation but, in the main, catalogues examples. Yet these very catalogues, together with the frequent cross-references between Chapter One and Chapter Two, are a vital part of the argumentation. They bring home the sheer mass of the arguments advanced for a whole group of cases; and, given the almost total lack of absolute certainty for any individual argument in our branch of scholarship, the cumulative force of all the arguments is the ultimate guarantee of the correctness of the overall argumentation.

Any reader eager to reach a quick decision on whether there is anything "in" the argumentation of this book, might, I suggest, begin by skimming the Introduction and then read §§1,1; 1,2; 1,5; 1,11; 2,6 (2-3); and 2,22 (on Hdt. 2.106 and 5.59-61).

When the result of a piece of research at first seems improbable and the proofs adduced in it then compel acceptance of its validity, the question arises what general misconceptions led to that initial misjudgement and consequently have to be revised. This is the sole function of several general discussions, especially those in the Chapter entitled "The wider implications". I can think of no more catastrophic misunderstanding than to confuse these discussions with the actual proofs on which the thesis of this book is based.

For the sake of brevity I have steadfastly avoided all divagation from my subject. I have thus sometimes been able to keep my own treatment of much-discussed passages down to a few sentences even though my view involves an entirely new interpretation. Purely historical questions and later parallels are entirely excluded from discussion. My reason for this is that the way these should be judged practically always depends on our judgement of Herodotus and not vice versa.

My references to the learned literature are much fuller in Chapters One and Two than in Chapter Three. I do hope that I have managed to make sufficient reference to views relevant to my subject or, at least, have done no worse in this respect than anyone else writing on it since Jacoby. I have taken pains, however, about citing as completely as possible scholars who have anticipated my own views. If any reader is interested in what sometimes happens in such matters I recommend the consultation of §1,2 n.2 and §1,11 n.1.

Kiel, January 1971 Detlev Fehling

INTRODUCTION

Herodotus often cites sources,[1] Greek and non-Greek, and it is well known that some of these source-citations cannot be taken at face value. For generations scholars have tried to explain how Herodotus can cite non-Greek sources for stories that are obviously the product of Greek thought and smack above all of the spirit of Ionian historiography and geography. At all events, it is unthinkable that these source-citations could be objectively true in the sense of representing genuine local tradition. There is another difficulty about these source-citations that has received much less attention.[2] In many instances Herodotus claims to have heard in widely separated places stories that neatly dovetail together; he heard a certain story in one place and then in another place he found it to be precisely confirmed or supplemented, or else corrected on a specific point. Yet it is hard to see how there could have been any link between the things he was told in these different places.

Just over a century ago[3] these difficulties led two scholars, A.H. Sayce and H. Panofsky, almost simultaneously to question the fundamental veracity of Herodotus' source-citations.[4] The latter

[1] There is a complete list of everything said by Herodotus that can be construed as a source-citation in von Gutschmid's *Index Fontium*. A list of citations of ἐπιχώριοι, or local people, is also found in Jacoby, 398f. (with one or two slips; under Πέρσαι 6.54 is omitted). For Panofsky see below. —There is a considerable body of literature on the real nature of Herodotus' sources. Here I need only mention Jacoby, 392-419; Legrand, *introd.* 57ff.; von Fritz, 407ff. and the summary in Schmid, 62ff. There are detailed source-analyses of Herodotus' whole work in Jacoby, 419-67, and in Legrand (along similar lines, but scattered over the notices prefixed in his edition to each section of the work).

[2] To put it more precisely, the problem occasionally receives some attention in a particular case, but I have been unable to find any reference to it in general terms.

[3] Although I give some chronological indications, I am not offering a "history" of the problem. With very narrow topics such as this it is often simply not possible to see any large, meaningful outlines of the kind necessary for such an account. Rather, I offer a systematic survey of the solutions so far proposed, relegating any incidental details to the footnotes. In general I do not go back beyond 1880. There is a brief account of Herodotean scholarship in Myres, 20ff. (1953). For more recent work see the reports in Krause (roughly 1945-58) and Bergson (1937-60) and the brief reports in MacKendrick 1 and 2 (1944-63).

[4] pp.XXVff; see also 'Season and Extent' (1885). Sayce is content to substantiate the charge of making false source-citations and expresses no opinion on the question of the real sources.

scholar came to the conclusion that most of them had no factual basis at all and that Herodotus simply invented them to fit the contents. As for the real sources, Panofsky followed what was then the prevailing view and assumed that Herodotus had largely used written ones. In some cases, however, he went as far as to suspect that Herodotus had simply attributed hypotheses of his own to the sources he cited.[5]

Sayce's and Panofsky's views of Herodotus' source-citations as fictitious met with general disbelief and attracted few followers.[6] On the other hand, their view that the contents often came from written sources became the standard one for a long time (though attention came to be more and more restricted to Hecataeus),[7] and this view has only recently fallen out of favour. Yet most scholars maintained that Herodotus had made his source-citations in good faith. The usual view was that he had taken them from the written works he had drawn on,[8] in some cases perhaps checking them by making enquiries

[5] Panofsky's work is the only monograph specially composed on the subject and covering all the passages. In view of its importance I list its main sections (there is unfortunately neither a table of contents nor an index): earlier writers either explicitly cited by Herodotus or possibly used by him as sources (pp.1-11); non-specific citations interpreted by Panofsky as referring to written sources (pp.11-17); hypotheses formed by Herodotus himself and attributed by him to sources (pp.17-26); sources chosen freely for citation by Herodotus (= principle of citing the obvious source as explained below, §§1,1 and 2,2; pp.26-39); party bias (§2,9 below; pp.39-40); distribution of information in longer narratives among various sources contrived by Herodotus in accordance with the principle of citing the obvious source (pp.40-48); source-citations for isolated details (pp.48-51); other matters (pp.51-55); parallels in other authors (pp.55-58); indirect information (pp.58-61); genuine source-citations (pp.61-69). For my own assessment of Panofsky's work see below.

[6] Rejection: Heath, (1886); and Croiset, (1888; against Sayce on Herodotus' travels); Hauvette, (1894) 158-76 (against Sayce, Diels, and Panofsky). For Panofsky's thesis the crushing verdict in Jacoby's *R-E* article, the most influential of all works on Herodotus, was the death-blow. Since then most scholars have carried out to the letter the judgement passed there that Panofsky does not deserve to be mentioned. As for successors, I can only mention Wipprecht, who assumes Herodotean invention for the introductory chapters and the story of Helen's stay in Egypt (see below §§1,11-13); Howald and Dornseiff, for both of whom see p.10 and n.37; and Malten (see below §2,2 n.7). Wiedemann also partly agrees with Panofsky (esp. p.26 n.1); he is the only one of those mentioned who actually refers to Panofsky.

[7] This was very largely due to the authority of Diels' article 'Herodot und Hekataios', published in 1887. Diels, incidentally, says hardly anything about either Sayce or Panofsky. This view of Hecataeus' role was carried to extremes by Heidel in a treatise published in 1935 but drawing on his studies under Diels many years before. Heidel credits Hecataeus with practically the whole of Book two. A qualified degree of loyalty to the Written Sources theory was maintained by Jacoby, Legrand, and many others. Jacoby, 402.37ff., speaks only of some quite certain cases ("ganz sichere Fälle") and Legrand, *introd.* 59f. etc., acknowledges an even smaller number. von Fritz as good as abandons the whole idea, ignoring altogether Jacoby's "quite certain cases".

[8] Diels, 433ff.; Jacoby, 'Hekataios' 276, who says that the Greek intermediary is missed out as unimportant ("der griechische Vermittler fällt als gleichgültig fort"); Legrand *loc. cit.*; Heidel, 113ff.

of his own.[9] Another, less common, suggestion was that whenever Herodotus cited a Greek community as his source he was replacing a writer's name by the name of his country or in some cases was even citing Greek authors under the name of the barbarian peoples they had written about.[10]

This Written Sources theory offered a simple, straightforward explanation for the Greekness of such passages. If it has now been abandoned, that is not owing to the emergence of any other more convincing explanation of the difficulties raised by Herodotus' source-citations. It has been found to be inadequate in itself. This seems quite clear today simply from a few general considerations. Scholars are no longer prepared to believe that great authors like Herodotus were heavily dependent on certain forerunners. In the case of Herodotus, they cannot see how he could have lifted whole passages out of an author like Hecataeus, who was probably still being read.[11] It is now also realised that there was not even any extensive literature in existence for him to draw on.[12] Scholars also see that postulating earlier authorities amounts to no more than shifting the whole problem away from Herodotus to these supposed authorities. Finally, what was once adduced as concrete evidence of written sources has now turned out to be scanty and misleading.[13]

These objections effectively disposed of the Written Sources theory, but that gave scholars no right to imagine that the problem itself was thereby eliminated. The Written Sources theory had been advanced because it was hard to believe what Herodotus himself had to say about his sources.[14] That difficulty remains, and the solutions

[9] Diels, 434f.; Jacoby, 402.46 (with explicit qualifications); Legrand *loc. cit.*; von Fritz, 409. Cf. Herzog, 158, who resorts to the same approach to try to save ἤκουσα, "I heard", in Paus. 8.24.13 (see below §2,30 (3)), which is refuted by literary parallels.

[10] Altheim, 2.165 (with a linguistically untenable interpretation of Περσέων οἱ λόγιοι as "der persischen Geschichte Kundige" [men with a knowledge of Persian history], who can thus be Greeks). Panofsky took many non-specific source-citations in this way (pp.12-17). In the case of Greek citations (as defined below in §2,5) this view has become the standard one.

[11] von Fritz, 409. Cf. also §3,2 n.1.

[12] Scholars have given up taking authors like Acusilaus, Xanthus, Pherecydes, or Hellanicus to have been sources for Herodotus (in some cases simply for chronological reasons). Nor do they now assume the existence of any extensive local chronicle literature (ὧροι) or of any writings on the Persian wars anterior to Herodotus himself. That practically eliminates the lengthy list in Panofsky, 5-20. This is one point on which Jacoby's criticism was entirely justified. For the revision of earlier views see especially Jacoby's *Atthis*.

[13] For a refutation of the earlier view regarding some of the main passages see von Fritz, *Anm.* 102 n.32 and 117ff. For further considerations see below §3,2.

[14] So, rightly, von Fritz, *Anm.* 120. Cf. e.g. Heidel, 102a n.20, especially the concluding sentence: "This statement [scil. on the miraculous agreement of the three Egyptian priesthoods in Hdt. 2.4.1], more than any other, convinced me many years ago that we are here dealing with fiction."

now commonly accepted are no more than superficial. Scholars admit that many of his source-citations are strictly speaking untrue, but they have a whole arsenal of justifications for them.[15] Greek émigrés or Hellenised natives are often supposed to be his real informants.[16] So Hellenised Egyptians, Libyans, Medes, Persians, Phoenicians, and Taurians, even Hellenised Sigynnae north of the Danube, are all conjured up. Egyptian priests and guides are supposed to have been accustomed to coping with the questions of Greek tourists,[17] and these "tourists" always bear an uncanny resemblance to Herodotus. The complete ignorance of their own national traditions betrayed by these supposed native informants is then put down to lack of education and low social status.[18] When all such remedies fail, there is always the more radical hypothesis that Herodotus considered himself entitled to attribute directly to native sources what he only had at second hand (in other words he was told what people supposedly said somewhere else)[19] or what he simply *inferred* must have come from this or that place.[20] One very frequent justification is that he more or less suggested to his informers whatever he himself wished to hear.[21] Scholars are then amazed at "how swiftly the ingenious Oriental can invent a whole new story or else expand and embellish an old one for the sake of satisfying the curiosity of a foreigner" (wie schnell die erfinderischen Orientalen imstande waren, sei es eine ganze Geschichte zu erfinden, sei es eine schon bekannte Geschichte zu erweitern und auszuschmücken, um die Fragelust eines Ausländers zu befriedigen).[22] I imagine the fellow-countrymen of the arch-deceiver Odysseus would have been

[15] Some of these justifications are in fact earlier than the Hecataeus-thesis and are also pressed into service by its supporters alongside the arguments for the defence already mentioned above (see the citations in the following notes).

[16] Hauvette, 175; Sourdille, e.g. 176-8; Jacoby, 432 (referring to all ἐπιχώριοι, or local informants); Legrand, e.g. 2.30; Pohlenz, 5; von Fritz, 167; and many others.

[17] von Fritz, *Anm.* 121; cf. the criticism by Heidel, 106b n.125. "Were there tourists in those days?" (Gab es damals Touristen?), Regenbogen very properly asks in his review of Legrand (p.491).

[18] This explanation is frequently repeated. See Maspero, *Annuaire* (1878) 137 (who may be the originator); Sayce, 138 n.5 and *passim*; Wiedemann, 28ff.; How and Wells, 1.413; Spiegelberg, 17f.; Legrand, 2.30; von Fritz, *Anm.* 106 n.44; and others.

[19] Legrand frequently resorts to this hypothesis (*introd.* 60 etc.)

[20] This is Macan's special method, but the idea is already present in Panofsky ("ut primum eius rei auctorem", p.27).

[21] See e.g. Sayce, 158 n.7, who speaks of "leading questions" (in an attack on Herodotus); Diels, 434, who has the author expounding his own views to his informants and then asking them for confirmation; Aly, 36; Pohlenz, 6,51 n.3, 117 n.2, 196; Erbse, 157; von Fritz, *Anm.* 121 (who has to combine it with a further hypothesis in order to account for the passage about Dodona). The original inventor is unknown to me. This flimsy hypothesis is vigorously assailed by Heidel, 106b n.125.

[22] von Fritz, 423.

much offended by an application of the east-west antithesis that denied the Greeks the same capacity! There was another hypothesis of a similar kind, now out of fashion, that stories had migrated to such places from Greece.[23]

Some of these hypotheses merely shift the blame for errors in Herodotus' work to unknown and unverifiable sources (the same is true of the many interpretations of individual passages that assume that Herodotus was the victim of deception); and all alike are capable of explaining the very same data as the hypothesis of Herodotean invention and to that extent have the same value. They are thus at the same time open to the charge of οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον (Hdt. 2.23). By their nature they can never be disproved but for the same reason they cannot be proved either.[24] They could be used to explain anything. One of these hypotheses, that of suggestive questioning, is even tantamount to, and in some cases identical[25] with, the hypothesis of outright Herodotean invention.[26] It makes the author go through a meaningless ritual of suggestive questioning and leaves the essential initial creative process in his own hands.[27]

Moreover, no one seems to have realised the enormous extent to which such arguments would have to be employed in a full defence of Herodotus' source-citations. First, the conceptions invoked in his defence have been fully worked out in only a limited number of central cases, whilst other difficult cases that were once familiar have been lost sight of. Secondly, scholars concentrate on the problem of Greek mythological concepts in the mouths of non-Greeks. But that is too narrow (and at the same time too wide) a definition. A more accurate definition of the problem is that Herodotus attributes conceptions of genealogical and mythistorical literature to local sources. Not only mythology but also concepts from the natural

[23] For polemic against this hypothesis in one instance see Pisani, 490.

[24] The astronomers' principle of σώζειν τὰ φαινόμενα gives a similar result. So too does the modern rule on verification, according to which, for example, the statement, "A is black" cannot be brought into doubt by the assertion, "A is white, but white of a kind that looks like black", since the two statements are only verbally different. [σ.τ.φ. = *account for all the observed data*]

[25] I.e. in cases where Herodotus says a hypothesis of his was subsequently confirmed by questioning (for the passages concerned see below §2,12).

[26] Macan's "inference" theory (see above n.20) is a weapon fit for the hands of the critic no less than for those of the apologist; and it is in fact identical with Panofsky's most radical attack (17-26; see below p.10) in those cases where not only the choice of source for citation is involved but also the content of the statement.

[27] We can often see this point being more or less admitted in the way discussions not involving the question of sources, for example, discussions of Herodotus' literary connections with other authors, often treat such passages as Herodotus' own property. Cf. e.g. Nestle, 13, on Hdt. 3.12.

sciences are involved;[28] and, in addition to citations of non-Greek sources, citations of Greek sources have to be taken into account. Thus the various stories of national origins touched on in Herodotus (§§1,7-9) clearly demonstrate that the problem is the same whether the source cited is Greek or non-Greek. On the other hand, the conceptions attributed to local sources are never simply Greek *tout court*; they always fall within the special interests of Herodotus' own genre. This restriction militates against the Greek Tourist theory, since the interests of tourists would surely be more diverse. Thirdly, scholars have largely ignored the considerable number of passages in which reports from different sources dovetail together. Here the only way to defend Herodotus' good faith is the Suggestive Questioning theory.[29] Fourthly, there is another problem analogous to the last one that has apparently gone unnoticed altogether. Herodotus sometimes adduces a monument as evidence for a story that can only be untrue (for examples see §§2,20-22). Hence we can only accept such monuments as genuine if we assume that they had in fact no connection with the stories for which Herodotus uses them as evidence. How is this other sort of dovetailing to be explained? Fifthly, Herodotus' apologists tend to think that all they have to do to prove a point is to indicate a certain possibility. Hence there is no critical examination of their theories. If the apologists really wanted to prove any one of these theories, they would need to show that the phenomena it is meant to account for only appear in those cases in which that particular theory is applicable; and though, as has already been mentioned, all these theories generally come to the same thing as saying that Herodotus simply invented the sources, there are some cases that can be used to decide between Herodotean invention and other explanations.[30] Instead, however, the apologists proceed on an *ad hoc* basis and simply make an arbitrary choice from among them all whenever they wish to explain a given case.

Furthermore, scholars usually forget that the problem is not confined to the false information present in Herodotus. To an enormous extent it is a matter of the absence of any correct information. The almost complete absence of any elements of genuine Egyptian tradition has simply been explained *ad hoc* by the

[28] Such concepts are attributed to Egyptians (twice; cf. §1,5, and §1,6 on 2.10.1), Scythians (cf. §2,2(1) on 1.105.4), Libyans (*ibid.* on 4.187.3), and Thessalians (§1,16); cf. also 2.104.1 (§2,21; Colchians and, once again, Egyptians).

[29] For a comprehensive survey see below §2,12 and the cross-references given there.

[30] Cf. the Subject Index under 'Crucial Cases'.

hypothesis of a low level of education among the priests and guides.[31] But, once again, the problem has a wider dimension. To take one example, how are we to explain the fact that Herodotus took such great pains to obtain totally false information about circumcision from sources in Egypt and Colchis and did not get any better information from the many Phoenicians resident in Greece (2.104.4; see §1,2 *ad fin.*)? There are other examples of the same sort; and together they indicate that at least in the passages where a foreign source is cited an absence of any genuine information is the general rule.[32] Nor is the phenomenon confined to foreign sources. Once again stories of national origins are the best example. Be they foreign or Greek, these stories invariably lack any local colour. Here again, then, we are not dealing with a few exceptional instances of lack of information against a background of generally solid information. Were that the case we would indeed be entitled to resort to *ad hoc* expedients to explain them. Instead this lack of any information is the rule; and that necessitates far more radical solutions than the usual ones. Such a general absence of information makes no sense at all unless in fact Herodotus never made any effort to obtain genuine information in the first place. He must have known perfectly well that other, non-Greek, peoples had traditions of their own and that these had nothing to do with those of the Greeks. Had he ever wanted to find out about such traditions he would have managed to find out something. As it was, he simply had no interest in them.

The apologists' dilemma becomes even more acute when we find that the customary Herodotean formula, λέγουσι οἱ ..., "The *X*

[31] Viewed in the cold light of day, what the proverbial ingenuity of scholars has achieved here is quite a piece of effrontery. By dint of two mutually complementary purely *ad hoc* hypotheses, one subtracting the Greek element and the other adding the Egyptian element, they produce in accordance with the formula a-a+b = b Egyptians, who for all practical purposes are pure Greeks, indeed clones of Herodotus. Sadly, it is hard to visualise them as creatures of flesh and blood. They listen eagerly enough to what Greeks tell them and they can juggle with Greek myths but they are so uneducated that they have not the faintest notion of the traditions of their own country, despite the fact that one of their jobs is to explain famous monuments to strangers. Even putting them through suggestive questioning must have taken quite a bit of coaching. If we think the whole thing through, we cannot see how they could have done more than slowly repeat Herodotus' own words after him. Yet he says the priests actually read out the names of 330 kings. —The total lack of any echoes of genuine Egyptian literature is generally explained by an appeal to "Volksüberlieferung", or "popular tradition". Yet where do we ever find popular tradition without any contact with the national literature? On this point Säve-Söderbergh is absolutely right and von Fritz, *Anm.* 104 n.42 is wrong (Lüddekens, 345, at least has the merit of looking for a literary parallel).

[32] The few demonstrably correct statements in the priests' account of the history of Egypt must rather be regarded as exceptions requiring a special explanation.

say", basically denotes not just any information Herodotus happens to have obtained but the authoritative tradition of that community. Thus in the account of the early history of Egypt (2.99-142) "the Egyptians", οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι, and "the priests", οἱ ἱρέες, are identical (see §1,15 below; cf. "the most learned", οἱ λογιώτατοι in 2.3.1). The most instructive example, however, is in the Prooemium to Book One, where "the learned men among the Persians", Περσέων οἱ λόγιοι (1.1.1.), and "the Persians", οἱ Πέρσαι (1.5.1), are clearly identical. It is no accident that the fuller formula is used in this, the first source-citation in the whole work, and nowhere else after that. This fuller formula defines once and for all how the simpler formula is to be understood. It is as if Herodotus had said, "The learned men among the Persians – from now on for the sake of brevity I shall refer to them as 'the Persians' and to the learned men of other nations in like manner." The common view since Maspero is that in Egypt Herodotus took the sextons for archbishops. He must have been just as unworldly in other places, too!

Of the total number of passages falling within the scope of the present study over half involve problems coming under one or other of the categories mentioned.

I do not deny that there is a whole range of *prima facie* compelling arguments apparently guaranteeing the authenticity of the very statements that are most improbable. Some statements attributed to local sources exhibit a bias appropriate to the supposed speakers. Others are linked with monuments mentioned by the author. Above all, the author sometimes comments critically on his informants' statements, weighing them up, casting doubt on them or providing confirmation. All of which apparently excludes the possibility of fabrication.

Yet there is no real force in such arguments. There is ample evidence that these very features are a matter of literary technique. If scholars have failed to see this, it is owing to an understandable inhibition: they imagine that accepting the fictive character of Herodotus' source-citations would mean characterising one of Greece's greatest authors as no better than a liar and a fraud. They thus exclude any possibility of fiction from the start, and having once taken up that position *a priori* they are unable to learn from empirical facts (which is not an uncommon thing in the world of scholarship). They prefer to explain away the many false source-citations by making liars of all his informants instead. They are like novel-readers so anxious for their hero that they forget the tribulations of many

minor characters. They willingly sacrifice whole hecatombs of ancients no longer able to speak for themselves on the altar of the author whose text has survived. Yet this inhibition of theirs is not entirely unjustified. Our intuitive picture of Herodotus' personality is a serious consideration. I shall not at this stage give my own picture of him. I would only point out that scholars would have done better to admit their difficulties instead of resorting to feeble apologetics. In the event both the apologists and the sceptics have failed to solve the problem of the source-citations in Herodotus. The apologists have not succeeded in convincingly eliminating the improbabilities involved, and the sceptics have been unable to provide an intelligible and convincing picture of Herodotus' literary *persona* that would square with his having made source-citations that were fictive.

That is the starting-point for the present work. I begin by showing that in a significant number of cases the fictive character of Herodotus' source-citations is beyond reasonable doubt. I argue each case entirely in its own right, without ever using the result obtained for one case as a proof for another. Many cases are argued along entirely different lines from others and are thus logically independent. Two points will emerge from this procedure. First, Herodotus' source-citations reflect neither oral informants nor written sources; they are generally attached to things of his own creation. Secondly, these source-citations are made in accordance with certain obvious rules; and the consistency with which these rules are followed can only be explained on the hypothesis that the choice of source to be cited is determined by the rules with no regard for any real sources Herodotus could have had (§1). In the light of these rules I then try to interpret Herodotus' source-citations as free literary creations. This method will prove to give simple, verifiable results and leave very little unexplained (§2). Since these first two chapters demonstrate the importance of free invention in Herodotus, I devote a chapter to that subject in general (§3). One particularly interesting aspect is Herodotus' use of typical numbers and I devote to it a special chapter (§4). In an Epilogue I indicate briefly some further conclusions that can be drawn (§5).

How, then, do these results compare with the earlier views outlined above?[33] Those scholars who assumed that Herodotus had written sources were basically right in their understanding of the

[33] Worth noting is Schmid's remarkably independent view of the matter (647f.). He envisages an inextricable mixture of truth and fiction presented in a completely stylised form.

facts. They grasped that this was not a matter of individual passages involving separate problems but of a general phenomenon. They also correctly identified the intellectual ambience from which such passages originated. But they failed to take the last fence, which was to forget about Hecataeus and all other earlier authors and to see that the written source they had sought so long was Herodotus himself.[34] By comparison, the more recent view, whose principal exponent is Kurt von Fritz, is a step backwards, even though it is right in discarding the notion of written sources. One decisive step in the discussion was Panofsky's discovery that Herodotus' source-citations are made in accordance with definite rules. In fact Panofsky correctly identified two of Herodotus' three basic rules, namely, the principle of citing the obvious source and the principle of regard for party bias;[35] and for a few passages he actually gave the complete explanation, namely, that Herodotus ascribes his own hypotheses to local sources.[36] In consistently arguing that Herodotus ascribed to local sources what were in fact his own inventions, this study does have one forerunner. This is Ernst Howald's 'Die ionische Geschichtsschreibung', published in 1923. Howald's paper met with almost universal disapproval, and his view of Herodotus' source-citations led to no noteworthy discussion.[37] It must be said, however, that he gave only a brief sketch with no detailed argument and no discussion of the learned literature, and appended it to a bold general

[34] When Jacoby speaks of "completely certain" examples of written sources (see above n.7), that is tantamount to saying that they demonstrably do not offer any genuine information, which is precisely what I argue in this book.

[35] Panofsky, 25-58, esp. 27 and 29. The general failure to recognise this discovery is probably partly the result of Jacoby's verdict (see above n.6). Yet, remarkably enough, Jacoby himself casually mentions the first rule and so recognises that there is something in it: "Deutlich ist, daß die Zitierten immer solche sind, die das Faktum aus irgend welchen Gründen genau wissen müssen" (It is clear that the people cited are always people who must for whatever reasons have accurate knowledge of the matter), 401.36. But neither Jacoby nor anyone else knew what to make of it, and so the discovery fell into total oblivion. I myself first became aware of Panofsky's work when my own was largely complete; and great was my delight when I found that every single one of his explanations agreed with my own. In the German edition I did not bother to mention this, because I have always thought it bad form to claim independence in a discovery which one has subsequently found in the published literature. In this instance, however, my reticence has misled reviewers. In fact the detailed agreements are a demonstration of the objectivity of the results thus obtained by both Panofsky and myself. —Malten, (1911) 98f., independently hit on the first rule in a single case (see below §2,2 n.7). I also find a hint at the second rule in Immerwahr, 81 with n.8. This rule was already seen, but misinterpreted, in several passages in Plutarch, *mal. Her.* (11, 12, 39, 40), in which he says that Herodotus forged testimonies for purposes of slander.

[36] Panofsky, 17-26.

[37] It is not even mentioned in von Fritz. Dornseiff, (1933) 82ff., has a view similar to Howald's but in his detailed application of it he is much less satisfactory. Howald himself never altered his opinion; see his *Kallimachos* 80ff. and 'Herodot' 34ff.

interpretation of Herodotus that can by no means be to everyone's taste. I shall therefore take courage and not allow myself to be deterred by the fate of my predecessor.[38]

As for the moral charge of fraud, the answer is obvious when we look back to the general considerations outlined above. Herodotus' practice is a literary one. For the charge of fraud to be valid he would have to be pretending all the time to be adhering to some code of practice comparable with what is now obligatory for scientific historians; as yet there was no genre of scientific historical writing. Still less can it be urged that he violated certain eternal moral rules. There has never been any such rule forbidding the combination of poetry and truth within a single genre.[39] Indeed there is one modern genre consisting in just that combination, namely the historical novel. I am not saying that Herodotus is bound by the rules of that genre. The proper point of comparison is that in both Herodotus and the historical novel poetry and truth must be blended not in an arbitrary manner but in accordance with a coherent method. Herodotus did nothing less than found a new literary genre, and he had to hammer out the rules for himself. For that task he was better provided with earlier models for the fictive elements of the new genre, mainly from epic, than for the scientific elements. In earlier Greek literature the work that is closest to Herodotus in the rules it follows is Aeschylus' *Persae*. In an earlier period the Israelites had developed a genre of historical writing which in places is remarkably similar to that of Herodotus. This is particularly true of *Samuel* and *Kings*. We shall return to the question of parallels (including later ones)[40] for Herodotus' source-fictions at the end of Chapter Two, and at the end of Chapter Three I shall summarise my view of his historiographical methods in general.[41]

[38] Since the publication of my German edition the situation has not changed much. Many scholars have repeated the old theses, others have avoided the subject. As for the small number of cases in which opinions have been expressed about my book, there is no point in listing them here. They are referred to where appropriate in the body of this edition. I must, however, mention here the very important publications of Armayor, who has arrived at results parallel to my own both on many individual points and in his overall view of Herodotus. The confirmations thus supplied by Armayor's work are particularly impressive in view of the fact that his work is quite independent of my own (which he very largely ignores) and uses entirely different arguments.

[39] It is well worth bearing in mind that neither Howald nor (most recently) Armayor is a *Herodotomastix*.

[40] The question of these parallels has been mysteriously ignored. Once again, the only scholar to have gone into the matter is Panofsky (pp.55-8).

[41] Several readers of the German edition (quite incomprehensibly, to my mind) wrongly understood me as treating Herodotus wholly as a writer of fiction. My formula "Erzähler, nicht Historiker" (a narrative artist, not a historian) has been particularly subject to this misconstruction. I therefore avoid it in this edition, but that most certainly does not mean that I have in the least altered my view of Herodotus.

offering? And in any case had there been such an offering with such an inscription it would have been absolutely certain that the story had arisen at Taenarum.

If, on the other hand, we assume that the Proof* is an invention, everything is entirely as one would expect, at any rate once we have come to see how Herodotus consistently avoids staking his own credit on anything miraculous; see §2,6 (1) below. We shall find two other examples of Confirmation by fictive objects in the next two sections.[7]

1,4 Snake-skeletons (2.75)

This passage is a close parallel to the story of Arion. A miraculous story is told, two different sources are cited for it, and further confirmation is provided by a material relic. Herodotus says that he was interested in finding out about "the winged serpents" and so he went to a "a place in Arabia near (*or* opposite?) the city of Buto". The definite article means that he is treating these creatures as known, as if, let us say, the fuller account of them in 3.107 was already taken for granted. As for the problem of the location, all I need say[1] is that it must be not far from Egypt and east of the eastern arm of the Delta. There Herodotus says he found enormous heaps of snake-skeletons. There is a story, he continues, that every year at that place hordes of winged serpents invade the land of Egypt and are wiped out by ibises. The Arabs say that this is why the Egyptians hold the ibis in special reverence; and the Egyptians agree.

These Confirmations have all the usual transparency. Although the two sources are only cited at the end for a special point, the whole

* *Translator's note.* As with "confirmation" (see note p.22), I generally use a capital letter for a proof offered as such in a text. For a definition of "Proof" in this sense see below §2,20 *init.*

[7] The closest parallel, however, is 2.141.6 (statue of Sethon with mouse); see below §2,22 (1).

[1] The position given for Buto in 155.1 does not accord well with this passage. Hence it has often been supposed that Herodotus is not thinking of the same city here; and in the German edition I followed this view (p.23 n.8). However, this reference occurs in the middle of a whole series of references to Buto proper (nine times between chapters 59 and 156). Hence Herodotus could not have referred to another place with the same name without making the distinction clear (cf. the analogous problems with the names Chilon and Labynethos discussed in my *Sieben Weisen* 53 and 122). Thus others may be right in thinking the two locations can be reconciled. In all probability, however, Herodotus has slipped up, which would hardly be surprising if he had never seen the place he refers to in this chapter or for that matter had never been to Egypt at all (see below §5,1).

story is obviously supposed to be told by the Arabs, in whose territory the events are said to take place. The Egyptians are then able to confirm the one point directly concerning themselves,[2] which clearly presupposes that they knew the whole story, too. As in other passages, formidable difficulties, if not impossibilities, appear as soon as we try transferring these simple relationships to the real world.[3]

Herodotus' luck in finding what he was looking for has all the simplicity of a folk-tale. He hears about the winged serpents of Arabia, goes off on a trip to the borderland, and sure enough comes upon visible remains of these creatures. He is just like the man in the folk-tale who goes "out into the world" in search of his brother and actually finds him. Herodotus' statements need some explanation here. In reality, of course, the only possibility is that he had previously heard of the skeletons there and so went to see them; and that is the one thing that cannot be read into the text. Herodotus does not say here – as he does elsewhere – that he was able to confirm with his own eyes something that he had previously heard. On the contrary, his words ἦλθον πυνθανόμενος περὶ τῶν πτερωτῶν ὀφίων, "I went [there] to find out about the winged serpents", imply that he knew of them only in general terms. Furthermore, the expression λέγουσι Ἄραβιοι, "the Arabs say", rules out taking him to mean that he had already heard about these things in Egypt. The only vagueness about his statements is that he avoids speaking of the ἐπιχώριοι, or local people; and that touch is probably a concession to credibility (§2,6), since the people living on the spot would be direct eye-witnesses every year of the impossible happenings he describes.[4]

Let us leave this problem aside and assume for the moment that these heaps of bones really existed. In that case the story told by the Arabs and the Egyptians must obviously be founded on them, since we can here rule out any possibility that the story arose independently of them and they then fortuitously offered apparent confirmation. (Contrast §1,3, where the bronze dolphin at Taenarum might be just remotely conceivable as a coincidence of that sort.) This may seem a

[2] For parallels for such precise calculations see below §2,13 para. 2. Cf. also §2.3. In the light of §2,12 *ad fin.* I do not envisage the Egyptians as a second source for the whole story, but the distinction is for practical purposes immaterial here.

[3] No apologist has gone any deeper into the difficulties than I indicate below. Panofsky briefly remarks that the source-citation is in accordance with the usual rule, and Sayce, 166 n.1, thinks that Herodotus incorporated a "traveller's story" into his work.

[4] Heidel, 67f., understands the text in the same way as I do (but concludes that Herodotus had a written source). I can find no other discussion of it.

trivial point, but it opens our eyes to a major difficulty. The story is in fact quite unsuitable as a local aetiological story. It is not set in the remote past as such stories usually are; and it would undoubtedly have been refuted over and over again by what the Arabs saw with their own eyes, since naturally no hordes of winged serpents ever appeared. Hence, always assuming the heaps of bones really existed, the story cannot have come into being in the place in which it is set. At best it can only have arisen somewhere very far removed from its setting, for example in a book written by a Greek from Halicarnassus! The only other possibility is that it is the sort of story made up by local people when they want to tease an outsider. In spite of the popularity of this latter line of interpretation I do not find it at all attractive.

Now it is universally admitted that no convincing explanation has ever been offered for these heaps of bones;[5] and I myself regard this as compelling proof that they never existed. In fact it is generally accepted that the enormous heaps of bones Herodotus describes are inconceivable, and the usual assumption is that he saw something else and mistook it for heaps of snake-bones. Yet it is hard to confuse snake-bones with anything else. Heidel doubtfully suggested nummulites,[6] but he does not argue that nummulites occur in regions east of the Nile in the enormous quantities Herodotus' words imply. Then there are Keller's fishbones;[7] but, apart from the fact that fish do not occur in any considerable numbers in the Arabian Desert, Herodotus could surely have told the difference. The Herodotus his apologists would have us believe in is a very strange man. He sets out on long journeys for the sake of a single detail but at his destination loses all interest and is satisfied with a cursory glance. Furthermore, we have to account not only for Herodotus' description, which refers to normal snake-bones, but also for the Arabs' belief that these bones confirmed their story of the winged serpents. This latter condition is not fulfilled if, for example, we assume that they had eaten Keller's fish themselves.[8] Thus no matter what accumulation of bones we

[5] Stein on 75.3, Heidel, 67b (but see my next note); "what it was is a complete mystery", Lloyd, 327. Most scholars tacitly admit as much by saying nothing at all: Wiedemann, 319, Jacoby, 427.11, How and Wells *ad loc.*

[6] 104 n.67 – as an afterthought.

[7] Keller, 2.302.

[8] No one supposes that the whole idea of flying snakes was inspired by these heaps of bones. Hence we need not concern ourselves with the great variety of attempts to find some underlying reality in that idea by the venerable Hecataean method of rationalisation (very properly placed under general prohibition by Lesky, 'Aithiopika'). Candidates include the flying lizards of South East Asia (of all places!), *genus Draco* (Wiedemann, Keller, *locc. citt.*; Lloyd; see next note), and locusts (references in Wiedemann; according to Sourdille, 74 n.4, first advanced by Miot in 1823; claims revived by Hutchinson in 1958). Others, again, (references in Lloyd) have thought representations of winged serpents on monuments may have given rise to a belief in the real existence of such creatures there. I can think of no properly attested parallel for such a process.

think of it will not account for the heaps of bones in Herodotus. On the one hand, if men were responsible for them they could not have given rise to such a fabulous explanation. On the other hand, if it was some recurrent biological phenomenon in that region it would surely also have been observed and described by modern travellers.[9] Certainly, no isolated event could ever have produced the masses of bones Herodotus describes.

My conclusion is that the whole thing is an invention; but of course I can hardly say that without being expected to offer some plausible explanation of how this extraordinary story came into being. It is sometimes the considerations tagged on at the end of a story that must be taken as Herodotus' real reason for telling it. In other words, we have to reverse the ostensible logical relationship between these considerations and the story. I discuss a very clear example in the next section (§1,5). This is not an idea that occurs readily to an ordinary reader, and so it is an extremely effective means of concealing inventions; and for the narrator it is important that they should be concealed. On my own view of Herodotus as a story-teller he can certainly be credited with knowing that particular trick. I therefore look for the solution in the remarkable fact that the local sources are only cited for the additional point that this is why the ibis is so sacred. What if Herodotus began by asking himself that question? Even in a country where so many species of animals are sacred one might well have wondered why this particular bird was so especially revered. From there it would be a short step to supposing that it destroyed some particularly serious pest. Herodotus' final step was to cast a suitable creature in that role, and the winged serpents of Arabia happened to be available.[10]

[9] Sourdille, 75, believes that flying lizards could once have existed there. That is zoological nonsense. Creatures that glide are always forest-dwellers; forests are the only places where such a capacity has any application and so can be evolved. Hence Sourdille's own rejection of all the other hypotheses can be taken as a confirmation of my own view.

[10] It should be clear from my account that I do not regard the flying serpents in *Isaiah* 30.6, which are often cited as a confirmation, as any special help for Herodotus 2.75; they are merely a parallel for this established conception (see 3.107). There are many points of contact between the Old Testament and the literature of Greece, so that the passage from the Old Testament is no proof of on-the-spot investigation by Herodotus. These serpents may have been mentioned in Greek literature before Herodotus.

1,5 Heaps of skulls (3.12)

The parallel I promised above is the very similar claim of autopsy in 3.12. Acting on information from the local people, Herodotus says, he made the following observation concerning the bones of the slain at Pelusium, where the dead of the two sides had been carefully separated (here an obvious objection is being forestalled): the skulls of the Persians were fragile and brittle and those of the Egyptians were firm. He then claims to have made the same observation on the field of Papremis. A climatic explanation is then offered. Initially Herodotus puts it – in *oratio obliqua* – into the mouths of the Egyptians, but in the second half, which deals with the Persians, the *oratio obliqua* form of signalling the Egyptians' opinion is quietly dropped.

It is quite clear that the observation Herodotus claims to have made in two places cannot be correct.[1] So once again his good faith could only be defended with the aid of special *ad hoc* hypotheses. Fortunately no further discussion on this aspect is required, as in this instance no one has taken on the thankless task of inventing any.[2] On the other hand, it is all too easy to see how the explanation came about. It is a piece of Greek theoretical speculation closely related to the Hippocratic treatise *De aeribus aquis locis* (*On Airs, Waters, Places*),[3] with which Herodotus has several acknowledged points of contact.[4] There is nothing surprising about this conclusion; it is only one of many cases where Herodotus puts Greek ideas into the mouths of his avowed sources.

In recent discussions of Herodotus' sources this particular example of the well-known phenomenon receives no attention, which is probably no accident, since, with the possible exception of the passage I discuss in the next section, this is the most devastating passage for apologists. No one will believe that the Egyptians, who had no knowledge of this Greek theory, could by pure chance have made an incorrect observation that was in conformity with it, while Herodotus, whose familiarity with it is quite specifically proved by

[1] Wilkinson's assertion to the contrary (1878) cited by How and Wells *ad loc.* is hardly to be taken seriously. —Cobet, 738, cites the sentence translated above as my reason for believing in fiction here.

[2] Scholars generally appear not to have seen any difficulty: Sourdille, 96; von Fritz, 125 and *Anm.* 90 n.86, etc.

[3] Cf. 20 on the moistness and softness of the bodies of Scythians.

[4] Nestle, 13, and *Hermes* 73 (1938) 25f., thinks Herodotus knew this work; others believe in a common source, which is seldom a good idea (cf. the literature cited in Nestle and in Schmid, 554 n.10; cf. also Heinimann, 172-80, who has, however, overlooked this passage of Herodotus, and also 1.105.4; cf. §2,2 below).

the part of the explanation he gives in his own name, only had to act as the passive recipient of an Egyptian report. After all, the only conceivable explanation for such a misobservation would be that the observer was predisposed to expect a result along these lines. And if we rule out the absurd idea that the Egyptians misobserved in conformity with Greek theory by pure coincidence, the other explanations normally invoked completely fall to the ground in this instance. Since, according to Herodotus, it is the natives who take him to the battlefield, his own account excludes the possibility that the initiative somehow lay with him as the Suggestive Questioning theory would require. At the same time, the remoteness of the site and the abstruseness of the idea could hardly be more unsuited to the hypothesis of Egyptian familiarity with Greek ideas. Thus the phenomenon of Greek theory issuing from the mouths of Herodotus' informants occurs in a place where, according to prevailing opinion, it had no right to be found.

There is no doubt about the conclusion to be drawn. If we cannot believe that the Egyptians made such an observation (which is something Herodotus actually says), then we obviously have no right to assume that *he* did (which is something he does not say). Hence the obvious starting-point for the whole story is a Greek supposition that the bones of northern peoples must be softer than those of southern peoples; and the confirmatory observation was then simply invented.

There is another odd detail that is relevant here. The account of the cause of the phenomenon is phrased by Herodotus in such a way as to avoid unequivocally ascribing the information about the Persian skulls to the Egyptians. This is admittedly not a point that would tend to invite much attention off hand, especially as the switch from citing the Egyptians to speaking *propria persona* is unobtrusive in form and could be understood as a simple variation in the manner of expression.[5] Yet, on reflection, it can scarcely be an accident that this transition is so readily explicable as an instance of citing a source to suit the content, a principle we have already so often seen at work: the Egyptian contribution would be restricted to the part of the observation concerning themselves. There is thus an underlying naive notion that the Egyptians are bound to know why people in their own country have hard skulls but cannot be expected to know

[5] The first half of the explanation is given in ἔλεγον ... ὅτι Αἰγύπτιοι μὲν (with μέν creating the expectation of a continuation). Then there is an intervening sentence. Then Herodotus recapitulates what he has said, using a fresh independent formulation (τούτοισι μὲν δὴ τοῦτό ἐστι αἴτιον), and then there follows, continuing the same form of expression, the second half of the explanation, which is concerned with the Persians.

why the opposite is true of the Persians. This is unrealistic, of course, since both parts of the explanation are obviously an integral unity and can no more be divided up among real sources than the story of the miracle at Delphi discussed in §1,1 above. Compare also the unrealistic splitting of a single motif in 7.133.1; see below §3,4 (2). Parallels for precise calculation by Herodotus of what a source can know are collected in §2,3 below.

I am inclined to believe that Herodotus deliberately made the division in his exposition of the theory unobtrusive enough for the average reader not to spot it. After all, he must have been well aware how illogical it was. Why, then, did he take such trouble to build it into his text at all? His constant meticulous care about his fictive source-citations suggests to me that his general principles of presentation would absolutely forbid attributing to the Egyptians any pronouncements on a foreign matter such as what makes the Persians' bones the way they are. Herodotus is often sadly lacking in the sort of sense of responsibility modern historians expect from him; yet it looks as if he did have a sense of responsibility, though of a different kind.

It might conceivably be objected against my interpretation of the chapter that Herodotus himself speaks in 3.12.1 of θῶμα μέγα, "a great wonder". But on closer inspection that only serves to confirm my point. The author's ostensible amazement is a necessary consequence of his avoidance of any appeal to the Greek theory known to him and is itself part of the fiction. Herodotus keeps up an act of having been shown something unfamiliar and surprising by the Egyptians. It is an example of the technique discussed below in §§2,17-19; cf. esp. §2,18 (2).

So far in our discussion we have encountered three cases in which it could be proved, in the last two in my opinion without a shadow of doubt, that the objective personal observations Herodotus cites in confirmation are fabricated. I therefore now consider the existence of such fictions an established fact, and henceforth I shall be taking account of the possibility of their also being present in other passages. I shall return to this topic in §§2,20-22 and also in §2,14, where I deal with fictive personal experiences. There is another type of Confirmation closely related to that found in the last two passages discussed. This is a fictive statement by the natives. Strictly speaking, 3.12 involves this type as well. For other examples see below §2,12.