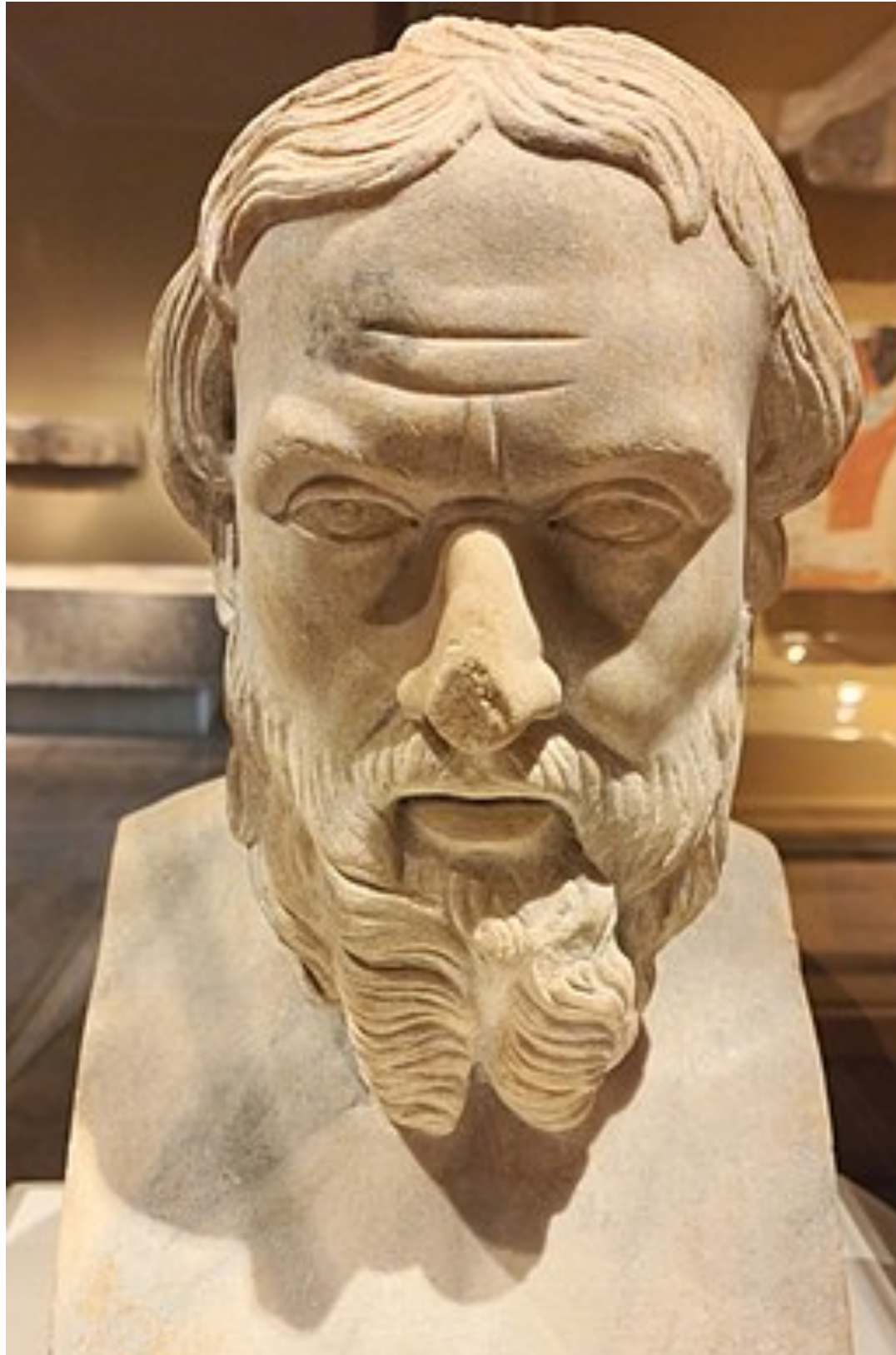


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# Herodotus



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## Version history:

1.0 February 2023: Initial draft with basic references as placeholder in the website.

## Image credits:

Cover: Bust of Herodotos, from Athribis, Lower Egypt. Roman period, 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE probably a copy of a Greek statue of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, [Wikimedia Commons](#); Public Domain)

World according to Herodotus 430 BCE ([Wikimedia Commons](#); Public Domain)



Born in Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum on Turkey's Aegean coast), Herodotus (484–424 BCE) has reasonably been dubbed the 'father of history'. Although the word (*historie* - "inquiry") was used before his time, Herodotus turned it into an inquiry about events in time.

Herodotus seems to have been exiled after political struggles against the Persian-nominated tyrant Lygdamis in Halicarnassus. In subsequent travels through Asia Minor, the Aegean Islands, Greece, Macedonia and Thrace, he accumulated information about the Persian Wars. He eventually settled in the newly-founded Athenian colony of Thurii on Italy's Tarentine Gulf in 443 BCE.

Subsequent travels took him around Sicily and lower Italy. He writes of enquiries in the northern Aegean and around the shores of the Black Sea. He is known to have travelled as far up the Nile as Aswan in Egypt. His work refers to experiences in southern Russia, Babylon and Phoenician Tyre and conversations with Carthaginians and the inhabitants of Delphi.

While he was not an eyewitness or participant in the events that he describes, Herodotus includes conversations with those who were and the grandsons of others who were also involved.

Significantly, he builds the process of enquiry into his narrative. He describes agreements and disagreements among his sources and his reactions to what he hears. While he feels obliged to report what was said to him, he is under no obligation to believe it. While Herodotus may have had access to documentary sources, the overwhelming mass of his material must derive from oral tradition.

Herodotus ' greatest achievement was conceiving a narrative that draws on local traditions and connects them to span seventy years and incorporates much of the known world.

The nine-volume result incorporated elements of mythology, geography, and ethnology. It also included details of early Greek history and a survey of the known world, followed by an account of the Persian Wars.

Although we do not know when Herodotus completed the Histories, a version had reached Athens by 425 BCE. The dramatist Aristophanes parodied the opening chapters in one of his plays, so it appears that the work was reasonably well known. At one point in his travels, Herodotus had lived in Athens as a metic (a resident alien with some citizenship privileges).

When the work appeared, it was more than a straightforward chronicle. Today, **Histories** represent the oldest surviving prose work of art in a European language.

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