

Herodotus' Renaissance return to Western-European culture

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Abstract. *Herodotus can be counted among the most important ancient historians. Indeed, his Histories represent the main source for the Graeco-Persian wars. However, the reception of his work has undergone many changes since the time it was written. The following study deals with Herodotus' reception in the time of the Renaissance. The author tries to answer and explain two basic questions that are narrowly connected with his name. The first problem relates to his veracity. The study addresses the question of how he was accepted by humanists — was he considered a faithful historian or a less trustworthy storyteller? The second problem relates to him as a pagan author being accepted by Christians. The author focuses on the mechanism which enabled this unusual combination.*

Rezumat. *Herodot poate fi considerat unul dintre cei mai importanți istorici ai lumii antice. Într-adevăr, Istoriile sale reprezintă sursa principală a relatării războaielor medice. Totuși, receptarea operei sale a cunoscut mai multe schimbări de când a fost scrisă. Studiul de față tratează receptarea lui Herodot în timpul Renașterii. Autorul încearcă să răspundă la două întrebări fundamentale care sunt strâns legate de numele său. Prima problemă este legată de veridicitatea sa. În articol se pune întrebarea despre modul în care a fost acceptat de umaniști — a fost considerat un istoric conștiincios sau un povestitor vrednic de crezare? A doua problemă vizează calitatea lui de autor păgân acceptat de creștini. Autorul își concentrează analiza pe mecanismele care au făcut posibilă această combinație neobișnuită.*

Keywords: Herodotus, reception, Renaissance, rehabilitation, Bible.

It is a well-known fact that the Greek historian Herodotus emerged twice in Western-European culture — once in Antiquity, and again during the Renaissance period, when his “rediscovery” was reinforced by the spreading humanism. The present paper focuses on how well Herodotus was accepted in the humanistic environment.

In this context, the study intends to solve several fundamental problems. Firstly, we will concentrate on how Herodotus' work made a comeback in the West; however, this issue is not central for us, and we will review it only briefly, especially since many aspects of this subject have been addressed in other works². Two questions are more important for us; the first

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² For the extension of manuscripts from Byzantium to Italy, as well as the search for manuscripts in the West, see SABBADINI 1905. For the manuscripts themselves, see HEMMERDINGER 1981. For Herodotus' extension in print, see BURKE 1966.

concerns the attitude of humanists to Herodotus as a historian. We will focus on the extent to which humanist authors recognized Herodotus as a historian, and viewed Herodotus' *Histories* as a reliable source. On the other hand, we will consider the role of entertainer that was often attributed to him, even in the ancient tradition. The second of our more pressing questions regards the mechanism which permitted and legitimized the acceptance of Herodotus as a pagan historian in the Christian world.

Herodotus' Comeback

Herodotus' work disappeared for a time from the medieval culture of the West, partly due to a decline in the knowledge of Greek language during the period of Late Antiquity. Migration of peoples caused the Greek language to disappear almost entirely, surviving only in the Greek-speaking East³. The corpus of Greek literature, including the works of Herodotus, was preserved thanks to Byzantine scholars. Historians approached him as their model, for instance Procopius (ca. 500–565 AD)⁴, or Agathias (532–580/594 AD)⁵.

In the West, knowledge of the classical Greek language and literature was restored at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. The Byzantine Manuel Chrysoloras (1315–1415), along with his disciples, were of merit in this regard, in the environment of the Italian humanists. Not only did Chrysoloras' followers in Italy teach Greek, but they often travelled to Byzantium and actively searched for Greek authors, whom they commonly only knew by their names in Roman literature.

Two more factors played a role in the further propagation of Herodotus: (1) translations, which allowed people who did not speak Greek to read Herodotus; this included the vast majority of scholars in the middle of the 15th century, and (2) the introduction of the printing press. Thanks to dissemination by print, a much larger number of readers had access to Herodotus. Previously, only the extremely rich, or those who counted themselves among the top humanists, could obtain Herodotus' work, as there were only a few dozen manuscripts. Indeed, today we only have about sixty handwritten copies of them⁶. In short, only a small number of people had the chance to reach Herodotus. Letterpress changed this situation, making Herodotus' work available to a whole new spectrum of readers.

³ Cf. BERSCHIN 1980, 120. Also LEMERLE 1971, 9. Wilson and Reynolds characterized the hiatus of the Greek language in the West as follows: "if indeed it was spoken at all, a knowledge became an attainment of exceptional rarity throughout the Middle Ages. Even diplomatic correspondence was sometimes delayed for lack of suitably qualified translators and interpreters." Quoted according to WILSON-REYNOLDS 1991, 118. A similar view can be found in CICCOLLELA 2008, 84.

⁴ See BRAUN 1893/94.

⁵ See CAMERON 1964.

⁶ ASHERI 1989, LXXXI.

In this way, a total of 44 editions of his works were published in Europe before 1700⁷. In the context of Greek works, this is a relatively high number. By comparison, Josephus (who was the most published historian of antiquity who wrote in Greek) was issued 73 times before 1700. This small number clearly shows that the Renaissance in Europe was linked mainly to Roman antiquity rather than Greek, even in terms of historiography. To illustrate, Sallust's *The Conspiracy of Catalina* was issued 282 times, and Livius was issued 160 times⁸. Nevertheless, 44 editions are not a small number; there were even fewer editions of Thucydides.

On this basis, Peter Burke tried to estimate how many copies existed in Europe at that time⁹. He made assumptions on the basis that editions of over 500 copies rarely appeared before the year 1500, whereas in the following centuries, there were more such issues. For example, as many as 1225 copies of Thucydides were issued by Badius in 1527. Therefore, Burke estimated the average number of copies to be 1000. Based on a calculation using this number, the number of copies of Herodotus in Europe before 1700 could have been more than 44,000. As is the case for the bulk of Greek works, most editions of Herodotus were issued in the 16th century. Specifically, 16 editions of Herodotus were issued during that period. Of the 44 editions that were published before 1700, 31 were in the Greek or Latin languages; five were in Italian, four in French, three in German, and one in English¹⁰.

Father of History or Father of Lies

If historians are to know the standing and acceptance of Herodotus in any period, including the Renaissance, it is important that they establish the degree to which he was accepted as a historical and trustworthy source in those periods. In this regard, according to a tradition that had been spreading from ancient times together with Herodotus' works, Herodotus was simply trying to entertain using history, and that is the reason he lied¹¹.

Indeed, Francesco Petrarca was well aware that antiquity treated Herodotus ambiguously—he noticed that, in the same sentence, Cicero labels Herodotus the father of history and a narrator of myths (*De leg.* I, 5). At another point Cicero even suggests Herodotus

⁷ BURKE 1966, 136. Based on the data in *Handbuch der classischen Bibliographie* that had been issued by F. L. A. Schweiger in 1830–34 in Leipzig. Volume I is focused to Greek literature.

⁸ BURKE 1966, 136.

⁹ BURKE 1966, 136.

¹⁰ BURKE 1966, 138.

¹¹ Criticism of Herodotus was already common in antiquity, beginning with Thucydides (I, 22), who criticized not only Herodotus' methodology, which he saw as untrustworthy, but also the goal itself, which in his opinion was limited to entertainment. Ctesias claimed that Herodotus was a liar, and Aristotle called him the narrator of myths. Nonetheless, they both drew from him. Cf. MARINCOLA 2007, 123. Cicero expressed his esteem for Herodotus as the "father of history", but on the other hand, he was aware of the historian's shortcomings, referring to his "innumerabilia fabulae": "quamquam et apud Herodotum, patrem historiae, et apud Theopompum sunt innumerabilia fabulae." (*De leg.* I, 5). Herodotus' work was flatly refused by Plutarch in his work *De Herodoti malignitate*.

was a liar who fabricated a backhanded Delphic prophecy for Croesus¹².

Lorenzo Valla was the first humanist we know of in the West who reinterpreted Herodotus' histories. In his translations of Herodotus, he made notes¹³ on all three of the manuscripts he used. These reveal his attitude not only to Herodotus, but also to Thucydides. He preferred Thucydides as a historian, deeming Herodotus “*dulcis*”, but also unreliable—“*fabulosus*”¹⁴. In Valla's opinion, Thucydides documented and corrected Herodotus' errors in describing the details of the Spartan institutions¹⁵. Valla also assumed that when Thucydides' criticized the methodology of some historians at the beginning of his work, he was addressing Herodotus¹⁶. Conversely, in an unpublished introduction to a translation by Giovanni Pontano, we can read a defence of Herodotus. This in itself is significant, as it illustrates an atmosphere in which critical awareness was not lacking. Furthermore, even scholars who did not have access to Herodotus' works knew, on the basis of ancient tradition, that part of his work may be untrue. Therefore, Pontano warned readers of Herodotus not to forget that historical works of antiquity did not emphasize truth¹⁷.

Venetian printer Aldo Manuzio (1449–1515) did much to revive Herodotus as a historian in the humanistic world¹⁸. In 1502, Manuzio published the *editio princeps* of Herodotus' works. He did so on expensive, quality paper, with a correspondingly high price for prints¹⁹. In the conclusion of *Histories*, Manuzio added a letter addressed to Joanna Calpurnia, where he rejected the traditional concept of Herodotus as a liar²⁰. According to Manuzio, critics condemn Herodotus unjustly, because he “*Quandoquidem pure et simpliciter ut accepit, posteritati tradidit*”²¹. Manuzio's defence was of immense importance to Herodotus' revival, although not immediately. Manuzio's books were bought and read by the most important humanists of the

¹² A similar prophecy was recorded by Ennius in the case of Pyrrha's attack on Rome. However, while Petrarca accepted Ennius' fiction, feeling that, as a poet, Ennius was legitimately using the fiction, he could not accept Herodotus doing the same. „*Itaque satis potest hoc ab Ennio suo quodam iure fictum esse. De Herodoto autem, quem Cicero ipse patrem historiae vocat, quod superioris oraculi fitor extiterit, non tam facile crediderim.*“ *Rerum memorandum* IV, 25–26. Quoted according to MOMIGLIANO 1984, 30

¹³ FRYDE 1983, 29. Edmund Fryde assumed that the notes were made by Vallo, based on their style and content. FRYDE 1983, 98. For details of the use of one of the manuscripts refer to ALBERTI 1960, 287–290.

¹⁴ This is based on Fryde's assumption that the note “*Hic Notar Herodotum dulce que eundem fabulosum.*” from ms. Laur. 63.32. comes from Valle. In his opinion, this had also been the “*general belief of his contemporaries*” FRYDE 1983, 95.

¹⁵ FRYDE 1983, 95.

¹⁶ FRYDE 1983, 95.

¹⁷ HARTOG 1988, 307.

¹⁸ See DAVIES 1999 for a detailed biography.

¹⁹ RENOARD 1803, 55.

²⁰ “*Nec puto apud te apud te integerrimum, ac summa aequitate visum ideo munus autoritatis habituras, quod mendaces in historia nostris habeantur, atque ita, ut propter Herodotum, vel ipsa Graecia virtutum omnium parens, ita alumnia disciplinarum mendax a nonnullis dicitur. Quando id errore potius factum, cum quod ita fit, cum accurate musas ipsas perlegeris, facile cognosces. Nam quoties indignum quid creditu scribit Herodotus, se feré semper excusat.*” HERODOTUS (ed. 1502), no numbering.

²¹ HERODOTUS (ed. 1502), no numbering.

times, such as Erasmus, Thomas More, Johann Reuchlin, and others. More editors of Herodotus, such as Joachim Camerarius in 1541, continued in the historian's defence.

In any case, Manuzio's defence did not mean that Herodotus was immediately accepted as a historian. Even the printer's friend, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), defended Herodotus more from an ethical perspective than from a historiographical one. He included several historical examples from Herodotus in his educational document *Institutio principii christiani* (1516). Therein, we can read Herodotus' dialogue between the Lydian King Croesus and the Persian King Cyrus shortly after the Persians conquered Sardis²². In the dialog, Croesus asks Cyrus whether he knew what his troops were doing. Cyrus replied that they were looting Croesus' city; Croesus then retorted that it was Cyrus' city they were looting rather than his. In this way, Erasmus illustrated several lessons for future rulers, to act in such a way that they can give an account of their actions at any time. In this way, he used Herodotus for moral instruction, but he also warned young readers to be very careful when reading the works of ancient historians²³, because they often celebrated monarchs and military commanders, who were nothing but wild robbers²⁴. According to Erasmus, Herodotus resorted to this distortion of the truth because he was a pagan and wanted to entertain his readers. However, Erasmus was willing to pardon this, because he understood Herodotus primarily as an artist, rather than a historian²⁵. Indeed, he rejected Herodotus as a historian, because he placed truth above all else in the work of historians, and truth was a principle that Herodotus obviously did not comply with, in his opinion²⁶.

We can read similar arguments, although more sharply articulated, in the works of Erasmus' friend Juan Vives (1493–1540). He mentioned Herodotus in his work *De disciplinis libri XX* (1531), where he dubbed Herodotus the father of lies rather than of history²⁷. That said, Vives considered inventiveness a general attribute of Greek historiography. In his opinion, the Greeks lied out of love for their homeland, to make their history more glorious and their works more interesting for readers²⁸. He also believed that Herodotus was justified by the fact that he named his nine books after the Muses²⁹. In this way, he qualified his histories as embellished, rather than as simply adhering to truth, to make them more engaging for readers.

²² ERASMUS (ed. 1965), 181.

²³ ERASMUS (ed. 1965), 201.

²⁴ IJSEWIJN-MATHEEUSSEN 1972, 41.

²⁵ IJSEWIJN-MATHEEUSSEN 1972, 41.

²⁶ In Erasmus' words "...id quod in primis exigitur in historiographo, nempe fidem." Quoted according to IJSEWIJN - MATHEEUSSEN 1972, 41.

²⁷ "Herodotus, quem verius mendaciorum patrem dixeris, quam quomodo illum vocant nonnulli, parentem historiae." VIVES 1532, 89.

²⁸ VIVES 1532, 89.

²⁹ VIVES 1532, 89.

Subsequent generations of humanists grew closer to accepting the concept of a truthful Herodotus that was postulated by Aldo Manuzio. Several important defenders of the veracity of the historian's work grew in Europe. To begin, we shall mention David Chytraeus (1530–1600), who began to spread Herodotus' name in German-speaking countries, while introducing him as the best historian: "*Ut autem inter omnes Historicos, quorum extant monumenta, primus est Herodotus, ita caeteros omnes Graecos & Latinos, & antiquitate rerum ac regnorum, & exemplorum multitudine, & eloquentia vincit.*"³⁰

A new edition, in Greek, of Herodotus was issued by Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574) in 1546. He appreciated the historian's precise expression, exact evidence, and (most importantly considering Herodotus was a historian), his truthfulness³¹.

The Renaissance defence of Herodotus culminated in the work of Henri Estienne (1531–1598). He introduced Greek at the beginning of the French language revival, as a tool for liberation from the influence of Italian culture. Herodotus played an important role in Estienne's argumentation, especially in his most widespread paper, which was published in 1566 under the title "*L'introduction au traité des merveilles anciennes avec les modernes ou Traité préparatif à l'Apologie pour Herodote.*" In his defence, Estienne appealed to readers to develop their own view of Herodotus rather than accepting those of others³². He rejected *a priori* any criticism of Herodotus, based on the simple argument that no man of the 16th century had lived in the times of Herodotus, and therefore it was not possible to determine whether Herodotus was a liar or not. Estienne's defence reveals information to us that would be otherwise undetectable; that is, for what reason were Herodotus' critics of the 16th century accusing him? The answer is twofold: "*la desmesuré meschanceté qui se soit en quelques acets décrits par Herodote*", and "*voyans qu'une grand part de ce que nous y lisons, ne se rapporte aucunement aux coustume et façons de faire qui sont aujourd'huy.*"³³ More specifically, Frenchmen were allegedly consternated by Egyptian habits: "*O le grans fols qu' estoient ces Egyptiens d'Hérodote (dira quelcun) en ce qu'ils adoroient les bestes*"³⁴. However, this was far from being the only critical point. Estienne said that the following issues also evoked doubt in the works of Herodotus: the size of Babylon, the power of the Persian monarch, the government of the Medes mages in Persia, and the manner of dressing³⁵. Nonetheless, we do not know whether Herodotus had been reproached by anyone for these points specifically, or whether Estienne was simply buttressing the weak points of Herodotus' works against possible attacks in the

³⁰ CHYTRAEUS 1562, B 4.

³¹ "*Narrationes sunt disertae: iudicationes expressae&speciosae: Explicationes accuratae&evidentes: Collectiones certae atque plenae in his rerum gestarum, hominum, temporum fides. Accurata compertorum relatio, dubiorum coniectura fagax.*" HERODOTUS (ed. 1541), *Prooemium*.

³² ESTIENNE 1879, Vol. I, 10.

³³ ESTIENNE 1879, Vol. I, 11.

³⁴ ESTIENNE 1879, Vol. I, 12.

³⁵ ESTIENNE 1879, Vol. I, 21–26.

future³⁶. In addition, Estienne referred to the fact that, even in the 16th century, there were still major differences between nations and their habits, thereby introducing to history the principle of cultural relativism. After all, in his Latin defence, which he published in the same year as a preface to an edition of Herodotus' work, he denied that such a pious man as Herodotus could have been a liar³⁷.

The revival of Herodotus through the endeavours of Estienne is documented in the historical work of Loys Le Roy (1510–1577, Ludovic Regius), who was a disciple and biographer of Budé. In 1576, he published the work *De la vicissitude ou la variété des choses en l'Univers*, where he not only recognized Herodotus, together with Thucydides, as the most accomplished historians, but he also used him extensively to describe the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian, and Greek histories³⁸.

Meanwhile, the attitude of Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), one of the greatest scholars of the age, to Herodotus was basically positive. In his work *Animadversiones in Chronologica Eusebii* (1572) he referred to Herodotus many times. However, he often compared Herodotus' information with that of other authors, and commonly rejected it³⁹ or recognized its boundaries. Importantly, however, Scaliger does not call Herodotus a liar. In any case, he was criticizing not only Herodotus, but the whole tradition that had grown up around the historian in ancient times. For example, when he rejected Herodotus' interpretation of Egyptian history, his rejection was not based on the premise that Herodotus was a liar, but on the fact that Herodotus was a foreigner who did not even know the language. These objective reasons prevented him from properly describing events⁴⁰.

It can therefore be concluded that it was Estienne's generation of humanists, rather than Manuzio's, who revived Herodotus. Furthermore, this increased acknowledgement of Herodotus led to the expansion of the Greek language itself. When such critics as Valla, Erasmus, and Vives received their education, the Greek language was just beginning its recultivation. For this reason, they could not access some areas of Greek literature, especially in the case of Herodotus. As a result, their assessment tended to be based mainly on tradition and, like Cicero, they emphasized that *fabulae* had been added to his *Histories*. Naturally, this reduced Herodotus' credibility. Conversely, for Estienne's generation, Greek language and

³⁶ At least in German-speaking countries of the 16th century, Herodotus was not reproached for these points, as we know from the translator of Herodotus, Schwartzkopff: "Dieweil ich auch noch zur Zeit nicht gesehen/dass eiener in Teutscher Sprach wider Herodotum geschrieben/unnd die angedichte Fabeln namhaftig gemacht hette/Als achte ichs unnötig/weitläuffiger darvon wort zumachen/und lasse mich an dieser kurtzen vertheidigung dissmals genügen." SCHWARTZKOPFF 1593, *Prooemium*.

³⁷ ESTIENNE 1566, 16.

³⁸ MOMIGLIANO 1984, 42.

³⁹ See, for example, SCALIGER 1658, 111.

⁴⁰ "Herodoto homini peregrino, & cui per malitiam vaterrimi Aegyptii imponere potuerunt, aut qui per lingue Aegyptiace inscitiam verum ex illorum relatu asequi non potuit." SCALIGER 1658, 279.

literature were integral parts of humanistic culture. Hence, scholars of that time had more freedom and independence, as well as enthusiasm in their assessments.

According to Arnaldo Momigliano⁴¹, maritime discoveries also played an important role in the historiographical revival of Herodotus, as they enabled Europeans to contact previously unknown ethnic groups. For example, Peter Martyr d'Anghiera and Francisco López de Gómara described the first voyages of Europeans to the New World. Their ethnographic descriptions and new knowledge of unknown countries brought new and shocking images of life to Europeans. Momigliano saw this as the main reason for Herodotus' revival as a credible historian⁴². However, we believe that his revival is related more to other developments of that time: the aforementioned re-establishment of the study of Greek, as well as the acceptance of Greek as the language of the New Testament and as a source to supplement the Bible and world history. These processes will be detailed in the next section. In any case, they revived Herodotus not only from an ethical point of view, but also from a historiographical one. After all, any author that could be used to supplement the Bible could hardly be considered a liar. On a larger scale, it was only Henri Estienne who defended Herodotus with regards to cultural relativism, appealing to his contemporaries not to assess the habits of other nations by referring to those of their own culture; this concept had been described by Herodotus. Nonetheless, even in this case, Estienne was not referring to newly found cultures. Rather, he was comparing habits in France with those in Italy. Momigliano's argument can also be challenged by the fact that Europe had been confronted with neighbouring civilizations long before the peoples of the new world were discovered. Therefore, we believe that these discoveries cannot be considered the sole reason for Herodotus' revival as a historian, and they are strongly exaggerated in this respect.

Herodotus and the Bible

Even in Italy, where humanism emerged, it was not always easy to study Greek. For example, Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) and Leonardo Bruni (approx. 1370–1444) had to defend the study of Greek literature in Florence against the rebukes of the clerics Giovanni di San Miniato and Giovanni Dominici, who saw in the study of Greek ancient literature a return to paganism.⁴³ That said, the study of Greek literature had influential supporters in Italy from the outset. After all, it was the Pope himself who had ordered a translation of Herodotus by Lorenzo Valla. Regardless, in some cases, the situation was much more extreme north of the Alps.

⁴¹ MOMIGLIANO 1984, 43.

⁴² This attitude has been adopted in other works that focus on the reception of Herodotus in Renaissance culture, such as OLIVIERI 2004; BICHLER – ROLLINGER 2000; or also GRAFTON - MOST - SETTIS 2010.

⁴³ CICCOLLELA 2008, 139

Initially, both the Church and academics at the Sorbonne were against the study of Greek in France, as it was the language of pagan literature. Therefore, it was a manifestation of courage when students turned their attentions to the language. This difficulty in studying Greek was described by one of the main supporters of the language in France, Guillaume Budé (1467–1540), as follows: “...cum quidam homines factiosi, literarum Graecorum nomen apertis coitionibus circumvenire, decuriatis et allegatis declamatoribus obterere, decretis inconsultis praecipitibus et crebris pessundare competerentur, ad extremumque proscibere. Nunc vero exhibita a pueris eorum temeritate et audacia, ob libros maxime Graecos tabernae et officinae bibliopolarum visuntur et frequentatur. Ludi scholastici conventusque studiosorum, vocibus praelegantium Graecorum personant.”⁴⁴ Another example comes from François Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553), who studied Greek works despite the restrictions and retributions he experienced in the Franciscan monastery in Fontanay-le-Comte⁴⁵. Eventually, after they searched his room and found Herodotus, Homer, and Lucian, he had to leave the monastery and move to the Benedictines, who were more tolerant.

Meanwhile, Erasmus of Rotterdam had done great work in spreading the Greek language and Greek pagan works in the Christian world north of the Alps, yet he received his passion for Greek indirectly. During his stay in England (1499–1500) he became acquainted with the reformist theologian John Colet in Oxford, who preferred to use the Bible and the church fathers in his theology lectures. As such, he tended in his teaching to refer to the very origins of Christianity. Erasmus adopted this method and developed it more. However, while Colet adhered to the Vulgate, Erasmus turned to an even more authentic form of the New Testament, returning to the very language in which it was written, *i.e.* Greek⁴⁶. According to Erasmus, only publications in the original language contain the undistorted content of the work⁴⁷. Therefore, a return to origins is necessary for people to properly understand. In this way, he established the principle of studying documents in their original language⁴⁸, and Greek was inevitable in this context. He subsequently contributed immensely to the expansion of the Greek language by issuing his edition of the New Testament in Greek in 1516. In this way he turned the language of pagan literature into a tool for the undistorted understanding of the Bible.

Erasmus’ argumentation was further developed by Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560). According to this educator and thinker, the Greek language was the most important of all,

⁴⁴ *De philologia libri II* (Paris 1532), quoted according to STEVENS 1950, 241.

⁴⁵ According to Budé, who corresponded with Rabelais, the Franciscans guarded Rabelais and other youngsters against contact with “pagan” literature. He described the environment of the monastery as follows: “Furthermore we know that those theologians, haters of the Greeks, have spent their utmost zeal and diligence that they might blot out the Greek tongue, as nothing else to be sure than the trial and test of their own ignorance.” Quoted according to WHIBLEY 1904, 10.

⁴⁶ See DIBBELT 1950, 55–70.

⁴⁷ MYNORS–THOMSON 1976, Vol. III, 32.

⁴⁸ WILSON–REYNOLDS 1991, 181.

because it was the very language in which God choose to reveal the New Testament to humankind. In his opinion, Greek history is important, too, because it begins where the Bible ends, and it contributes significantly towards an overview of history from the beginning until now⁴⁹. According to Melanchthon, the Greek language generally, and Herodotus in particular, ceased to be intolerable sources of paganism in the Christian world. In fact, they were just the opposite, contributing to a complete image of the world and thus moving man closer to God.

Melanchthon's view of Herodotus as a source to supplement the Bible was embraced by the German Reformers. For instance, we can find a similar view in *Chronik Kärntens* by Michael Gothard Christalnik (†1595). He states that Herodotus “*mit grossem Nutz neben der heyligen Biblia mag gebracht werden.*”⁵⁰ Thanks to Herodotus, elements of biblical history could be complemented, such as the information regarding the tower of Babel⁵¹.

This concept was received quite smoothly by Melanchthon's disciples. Among them, David Chytraeus (already mentioned) was the most important in the context of Herodotus. His teaching of history was largely based on the study of ancient historians, particularly Herodotus. In fact, he ran two lecture series about the Greek writer: one from 1559 to 1562, and one in 1572⁵². Later, he wrote *Chronologia Historiae Herodoti & Thucydidis* on the basis of these lectures; the core of this work comprises comments on the individual books of Herodotus, while the appendix contains a chronology of history, depicting events from Creation to the start of the *Histories* of Herodotus. Based on Chytraeus' interpretation, the Greek historian became the logical continuation of the Bible, as postulated by Chytraeus' teacher Melanchthon. When writing the history, Chytraeus did not distinguish between the Bible and ancient sources. As such, Herodotus complemented the Bible rather than opposed it⁵³.

In England, even such an ardent Catholic as Thomas More (1478–1535) saw no reason to reject Herodotus from the perspective of Christian morality. In his youth, Thomas More was even considering joining a monastery⁵⁴; later he was willingly executed for his devotion to Catholicism. Yet we learn from his most famous work *Utopia* (1516) that he respected and recommended Herodotus⁵⁵.

We can conclude that the humanists succeeded to some extent in tucking the work of Herodotus into the Christian culture. The historian gradually became a source for world

⁴⁹ BEN-TOV 2009, 40.

⁵⁰ Quoted according to NEUMANN 1999, 66.

⁵¹ BICHLER – ROLLINGER 2000, 126.

⁵² See DETLOFF 1908, 31–32 for details.

⁵³ In the wording of Chytraeus: “Herodoti lectio sacras Historias multis in locis illustret, ut inter enarrandum pluris indicabo: garat nobis huius authoris cognitio esse debet. Praesertim cum in eo ipso momento fére, ubi Biblia desinum Herodotus suam Historiam incipiat.” CHYTRAEUS 1562, B 2.

⁵⁴ This was mentioned by More's friend Erasmus of Rotterdam in his letter to Ulrich Hutten. See ADAMS 1992, 125.

⁵⁵ See MORE 2005, 78.

history and to supplement biblical motifs. Erasmus of Rotterdam played a decisive role in the acceptance of Herodotus in Christian culture; he himself used Herodotus, and his enthusiasm for the Greek language influenced humanists throughout Europe. The subsequent work of Philipp Melanchthon was also an important element in the acceptance of Herodotus—Melanchthon accepted Herodotus as a continuation of the Bible; thanks to him, Herodotus was later accepted, regardless of whether he was reproached for deficiencies. This acceptance became universal.

The acceptance of Herodotus was facilitated by the spirit of those times, in which even so severe a critic of Herodotus as Juan Vives defended him. This demonstrates the belief of humanists in the importance of Greek literature. Because they were finding new knowledge, they were even willing to forgive the errors of the Greek authors. Herein we can see the key to the positive acceptance of Herodotus, despite his paganism and his reputation as a liar, which had accompanied him since antiquity.

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