

Herodotus, Histories

Book I: Clio

The history of Herodotus of Halicarnassus is here displayed, so that the works of men do not become lost in time, and that great and marvellous deeds, some performed by Greeks and others by barbarians, do not lose their glory; and especially to show the reason why the two peoples fought one another.

1. The learned men of Persia say that it was the Phoenicians who first started the dispute. These people, they say, came from the so-called Erythraean Sea¹ to our own sea, and, having settled in the land which they now inhabit, immediately applied themselves to making long sea-voyages, carrying goods from Egypt and Assyria and other places to Argos. 2. (This Argos was then pre-eminent in every way in the country now called Greece.) So the Phoenicians came to Argos and set out their cargo. 3. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival, when their wares had almost all been sold, a number of women came down to the sea, and among them was the king's daughter; her name, as both the Persians and the Greeks agree, was Io, daughter of Inachus. 4. These stood by the ship's stern buying the things they wanted most, whilst the Phoenicians encouraged one another and set upon them. Most of the women escaped, but Io and several others were carried off. The Phoenicians threw them aboard their ship and sailed away to Egypt.

2. It was in this way, as the Persians (though not the Greeks) say, that Io came to Egypt; and this was the first of the wrongs committed. Afterwards, some Greeks (though the Persians cannot give their name) landed at Tyre of Phoenicia and made off with the king's daughter, Europa. These Greeks may have been Cretans. Thus the account between them was made equal; for the next wrong, however, the Greeks were responsible, 2. for they sailed in a warship to Aea of Colchis and to the River Phasis, and then, when they had completed the other business for which they had come, made off with the Medea, the king's daughter. 3. When the king of Colchis sent a herald to Greece demanding the return of his daughter and reparation for her kidnapping, the Greeks replied that, as they had not demanded reparation for the abduction of the Argive Io, so too they would not give any to the Colchians.

3. In the next generation after this, the Persians say, Alexander son of Priam, who had heard of these things, wanted to kidnap himself a Greek bride, being fully confident he would pay no penalty, as the Greeks had paid none. 2. So he abducted Helen, and the Greeks resolved to send a messenger demanding the woman's return and reparation for the wrong they had suffered; when this message was delivered, however, the Trojans pointed to the kidnapping of Medea, and said that the Greeks demanded reparations from others, but had not been willing to give reparations themselves nor to return their booty when asked.

4. Hitherto the contention had been a matter of kidnapping only, but for what happened afterwards the Greeks were very much to blame, for they invaded Asia before the Asians invaded Europe. 2. The Persians judge that carrying off women is the work of unjust men, but that being zealous to avenge such kidnapping is foolish, whereas taking no concern is the mark of the wise: for it is clear that, if the women were unwilling, they would never have been taken in the first place. 3. The Persians also say that they made no complaint about the women taken from Asia, whereas the Greeks, for the sake of a Lacedaemonian woman, gathered a great army, sailed to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam. 4. Since then they have always considered the Greeks to be their

¹ Literally the "Red Sea", although the term refers not to our Red Sea, but to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

enemies. For the Persians claim Asia as their own, and all the barbarian peoples dwelling therein; Europe and the Greeks they regard as separated off.

5. This, then, is what the Persians say occurred, and in the capture of Troy they find the source of their enmity towards the Greeks. 2. But the Phoenicians do not agree with the Persians about Io: they deny using force to bring her to Egypt, but say that, whilst still in Argos, she had intercourse with the ship's captain; then, finding herself pregnant, and being ashamed to tell her parents, she willingly sailed off with the Phoenicians lest her condition be discovered.

3. Such, then, are the accounts which the Persians and Phoenicians give. As for myself, I will not say the affair happened in this way or that, but will indicate the first man whom I myself know to have done unjust deeds against the Greeks, and then go on with my history, detailing small cities of men as well as great. 4. For most of the cities which were once great have since become small, whilst those which were great in my own time were previously small. Knowing, therefore, that human happiness never remains in one place, I shall deal with both alike.

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