

# Herodotus as a Travel Writer

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## I. Introduction

The travels and travel experiences of ancient authors played a crucial role in many ancient texts, yet a clearly defined genre of travel writing did not exist at that time. Even though travelogues were not a characteristic literary form in antiquity, we can find descriptions among ancient writers that can be identified as travelogues with all their peculiarities. A comprehensive modern research that would deal with this topic has still not been conducted, and it was only in the last decade that researchers began to deal with this issue and look for the peculiarities of travelogues in the works of ancient authors.

Traveling in antiquity was considered an essential source of knowledge and wisdom, and was associated with the ideals of Greek culture and education.<sup>2</sup> The traveller could learn on his travels by seeing and visiting different places and civilizations, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, or India. These civilizations particularly attracted Greeks because they were aware that these civilizations were older than they were, which gave them the possibility to learn from them. On the other hand, group travel was also the result of trade or war, and the individuals who were part of such expeditions described landscapes, curious customs, and other particularities that had until then been unknown to the Greeks. Ancient texts are not particularly dedicated to landscape descriptions and personal experiences, but in them, we can find passages that present old known and unknown peoples, the appearance of ancient cities or smaller settlements, as well as the characteristics of their population, including the descriptions of their customs and habits.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Pretzler, "Greek Intellectuals on the Move: Travel and Paideia in the Roman Empire," in *Travel, geography and culture in ancient Greece, Egypt and the Near East*, ed. Colin Adams and Jim Roy (Oakville: David Brown Books, 2007), 123-138.

Should we classify the ancient works that contain data which can be identified as belonging to the genre of the travelogue, the most accurate would be the division set by M. Pretzler,<sup>3</sup> who argues that such writings, in the widest sense, can be divided into two categories: 1. reports on certain travels and 2. texts that present details about places and cultures without a special discussion of the travel process itself.<sup>4</sup> If we accept this categorization, then we can return to the very beginning of Greek literature and look for traces of such information with Homer. The most relevant such data is the so-called “list of ships” found in the *Iliad*, which provides a list of Greek cities and tribes in a roughly geographical order.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Homer also provided descriptions of certain cities such as Knossos, Troy, and others, where we can also recognize information that can be divided according to Pretzler’s division.

If we focus on the ancient peoples, especially the Greeks, the easiest and most common way to travel was by sea.<sup>6</sup> In Greek history, the Mediterranean Sea was, for the most part, the centre of political and cultural events. On the other hand, the land was travelled on foot or by horseback. Those who were more affluent could also use carriages. The use of carriages is important because those engaged in writing and recording carried numerous utensils, including a large number of books. Possibly, slaves helped them during their travels.<sup>7</sup> As for accommodation, it came in various forms, but travellers preferred private accommodation, especially if they planned to stay somewhat longer in one place.<sup>8</sup>

## II. Travelogues in Antiquity

Numerous ancient texts bear the characteristics of travelogues. The first travelogues can be traced back to the earliest geographical texts created from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries BC,

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3 M. Pretzler, “Travel and Travel Writing,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies*, ed. George Boys-Stones, Barbara Graziosi, Phirose Vasunia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 357.

4 Ibid.

5 Homer. *Iliad*, Volume I: Books 1-12, trans. A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), Il. 2 484-785. (= Hom. *Il*)

6 L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 104.

7 M. Pretzler, “Turning Travel into Text: Pausanias at Work,” *Greece and Rome* 51:2 (2004): 202.

8 L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, 87-90 and 197-209.

which consisted of sailors' diaries, describing the delineation of coasts including important places and landmarks, and listing the steps and distances of and between land routes. The most important representatives of the travelogue genre are Hecataeus of Miletus who wrote the *Description of the Land. A Travelogue around the Known World* and Scylax of Caryanda who accompanied the Persian King Darius I on a war campaign, probably on the stretch of road from the Indus to the Arabian Peninsula. This type of literature was prevalent at that time, most likely because it was necessary for the navigation of the Mediterranean Sea, but also because of the active colonization carried out by the Greeks at that time. This was a common occurrence in all areas of the Mediterranean confirmed by Euthymenus of Massalia, who described the journey from Massalia to the African coast, and Hanno of Carthage, who wrote *The Journey of Hanno, the King of Carthage* in the first half of the fifth century BC. These works are significant both for their descriptions, and for their authors' interests in the customs of the neighbouring peoples.<sup>9</sup> Nearchus from Crete, Alexander's military leader who wrote about the peoples along the Indian and Persian coasts, should also be mentioned here.<sup>10</sup> Later geographers, such as Strabo, continued to rely on this data, but the work of geographers could already include information about local landscapes, history, and culture of certain places,<sup>11</sup> which already shows that ancient writers received such information exclusively on their travels. However, if we are to discuss works that are very similar to travelogues in antiquity, then the literary form of a *periegesis*, meaning "to lead around and show; (of law) to inspect on the spot," best corresponds to travelogues. Periegeses, i.e. descriptions or guides, reached their current form only in the early Hellenistic period. Above all others, they

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9 O. Luhtar, M. Šašel Kos, N. Grošelj, G. Pobežin, *Povest istorijske misli. Od Homera do početka 21. veka. Delo I* [A history of historical thought. From Homer to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Part I] (Sremski Karlovci, Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2013), 39-49.

10 The writings of all mentioned authors, Hecataeus of Miletus, Scylax of Caryanda, Euthymenus of Massalia, Hanno of Carthage and Nearchus from Crete, are only known indirectly in fragments in other Greek and Roman authors. See more: Stephanie West, "Hecataeus," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, Esther Eidinow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 649; Eric Herbert Warmington, Jean-François Salles, "Scylax," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1335; Nicholas Purcell, "Hanno," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 645; Albert Brian Bosworth, "Nearchus," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1004.

11 M. Pretzler, *Travel and Travel Writing*, 357.

developed on the basis of the description of logographers, the aforementioned Hecataeus of Miletus and his younger contemporary, Herodotus.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most important representatives of periegesic writers was Pausanias. In his opus of ten books, he described Attica, Corinth, Laconia, Messenia, Elis, Achaia, Arcadia, Boeotia and Phocis. He wrote periegeses, i.e. works describing cities, countries, and their landmarks. He was not the first author to write a periegesic, but the concept of his work is such that it can also be considered a travelogue, because, in order to complete his work, Pausanias travelled around Hellas with the purpose of making his writing appealing to the future reader. In order to achieve this, he describes certain places, monuments and characteristic buildings, but in the descriptions, he also inserts many stories, historical data, myths, short stories and various biographies.<sup>13</sup> We know little about Pausanias' origins. In his work, we can recognize indications that he was originally from Lydia, from the city of Magnesia, the present-day Manisa, and that he was from a wealthy social class and a supporter of the monarchical system with a good ruler at the head of the state.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear what his main motives were for writing *The Description of Hellas*, but the first book offers several passages outlining his goals and methods.<sup>15</sup>

Oral tradition is one of his main sources and he tries to record the oral tradition that was not previously written down. Here it is possible to apply another classification put forth by M. Pretzler according to which one group of scholars classifies Pausanias' periegeses as a kind of local, oral tradition without exploring the nature and origin of the sources, while the other group focuses on identifying literary sources for the data used by Pausanias.<sup>16</sup> This division is made only to indicate the differences in the approach to the study of Pausanias' work, yet it is important for our work because we see that the oral tradition is an important source

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12 Lj. Vulićević, "O periegesama i o Pausaniji periegeti" [On Pausanias and his Periegeses], in Pausanija, *Opis Helade, knj. I*, ed. M. Flašar (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1994), 8.

13 M. Đurić, *Istorija helenske književnosti* [The History of Hellenic literature] (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1996), 739.

14 Lj. Vulićević, "O periegesama i o Pausaniji periegeti," 12-13; A. Spawforth, "Pausanias," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1097.

15 M. Pretzler, "Pausanias and Oral Tradition," *The Classical Quarterly* 55:1 (2005): 235.

16 Ibid.

for the formation of the travelogue as a literary genre dominated by the testimony of the author and his oral reporters about historical events, or myths and legends.

If we take a closer look at Pausanias' work, it can be said that we are dealing with an experienced traveller who is well prepared and who may also bring history books along on his travels in order to be better equipped to write. This can be concluded from the fact that Pausanias very often seeks a historical framework for what he writes about, because although autopsy is his guiding principle, it still does not prevent him from giving exhaustive reports that he places in the historical framework whenever possible.<sup>17</sup> These few examples show that among the works of ancient writers we can find the characteristics of travelogues, although their basic function is not to be classical travelogues that we are accustomed to from some later times.

### III. Characteristics of Herodotus' work

Looking for the characteristics of travelogues among ancient writers, our attention is focused on Herodotus. In describing the Greco-Persian wars he wrote the first true historiographical work, becoming the first true historiographer in the European tradition. Later, he was named the father of history.<sup>18</sup> Although this is a historical work, it contains many characteristics of a travelogue, since, in order to write his work, Herodotus travelled and recorded what he saw, heard from others and studied, i.e. learned through inquiry.<sup>19</sup> We can see this in many of his first-person singular statements when he wants to emphasize the manner in which he collects information or when he emphasizes success or failure in trying to attain that information.<sup>20</sup>

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17 M. Pretzler, "Turning Travel into Text: Pausanias at Work," 207-211.

18 He was referred to as the father of history (...*apud Herodotum patrem historiae*) by Cicero in *On the Laws (De Legibus)* (Cic. Leg. I 1, 5).

19 Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, Volume I: Books 1-2, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), Hdt. II 99 (= Hdt); K. Maricki Gadanski, *Grčka istorija. Deo I* [Greek History. Part I] (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu, 1992), 72; O. Luhtar, M. Šašel Kos, N. Grošelj, G. Pobežin, *Povest istorijske misli. Od Homera do početka 21. veka. Deo I*, 56; M. Đurić, *Istorija belenske književnosti*, 399.

20 N. Luraghi, "Meta-historie: Method and Genre in the Histories," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Carolyn Dewald, John Marincola (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 76.

His intention was to describe Persia, a powerful state composed of many conquered peoples, because he wanted to glorify the great victory of a small democratic polis over a huge state headed by a king and dominated by Eastern despotism. Here we see that he exhibits an antagonism between East and West, between Europe and Asia, and ultimately, an antagonism between Hellenes and the barbarians.<sup>21</sup> For that purpose, he collected data by interviewing, and as the most appropriate source he considered the local population of various profiles, with the proviso that he always gave priority to priests, whom he considered the most educated members of the community, especially when it came to describing historical events.<sup>22</sup>

Herodotus' diverse style and his way of collecting data reveals another important fact for understanding his work as a travelogue. When describing cities, the most famous cities such as Babylon, Persepolis or Athens occupy a central place, but he pays equal attention to other smaller cities, i.e. poleis. It is in the attention he pays to smaller cities that we recognize his intention to explore their history in the same manner that he does with large cities,<sup>23</sup> which, in turn, exhibits his belief that explaining and discovering the history of these smaller communities can achieve the same effect as explaining and discovering larger communities, all with the aim of discovering historical truths. His approach to the places he visits is inclusive and he pays equal attention to small and large cities, approaching them without bias with respect to the reports he receives from its inhabitants or with already formed attitudes about its inhabitants.<sup>24</sup> Narration of events and the cause of events that are guided by certain goals, give the expected result in the interpretation of history. Herodotus developed this concept so firmly that by describing smaller units, he also developed some other literary genres that can without a doubt be highlighted among his works as a separate unit, the so-called stories. The descriptions of these smaller units are a real example of travelogues, since, in most cases, they contained the appearance of the cities, the founding of the city and the oral tradition

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21 M. Đurić, *Istorija belenske književnosti*, 395.

22 O. Luhtar, M. Šašel Kos, N. Grošelj, G. Pobežin, *Povest istorijske misli. Od Homera do početka 21. veka. Deo I*, 56.

23 Hdt. I 5.

24 R. Friedman, "Location and dislocation in Herodotus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 166.

for which the city is best known in history. This should not be surprising, because it was one of the main ways in which logographers communicated their data, but Herodotus differs from them in that he critically observed historical events.

In addition to the descriptions of cities and monuments that he saw on his travels, an important characteristic of Herodotus' work are also oral narratives. He did not need to invent stories in his work, because the oral tradition gave him a huge amount of material containing unwritten stories. Many authors have interpreted Herodotus' written oral tradition in different ways and sought the probable sources for these stories. It is not certain who his sources were and we can only rely on the information given to us by Herodotus in his work.<sup>25</sup> Based on this information, the main source is his conversations with priests, whom he trusted as the most educated people of that time. The consequence of recording oral tradition and gathering information is the development of Herodotus' interesting style of recording data. Namely, he develops a specific style of citing chronology. He follows the event he describes from the beginning to the end of that event no matter how long it lasts. However, he very often goes beyond the framework of that story when he mentions a person or a concept that is partially related to that story, and then follows that concept from the beginning to the end, returning later to the original story. The aim of this procedure is for the readers to conjure up as clear a visual effect as possible from many different aspects. A good example is when he describes the interest of Croesus, king of Persia, with respect to which polis is the most powerful among the Hellenes. Herodotus writes what Croesus learned about the Athenians and Spartans and what their main characteristics and abilities were, but there are several other descriptions in that story that could be separated as distinct stories, such as the story of how Pisistratus came to power in Athens, or how Lycurgus wrote the constitution in Sparta.<sup>26</sup>

It has already been mentioned that some earlier writers influenced Herodotus, but we should also not ignore the role of Homer, especially since, in the first four books, Herodotus, just like Odysseus, visited the cities of many peoples and got to know their mentality,<sup>27</sup> and then in the

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25 A. Griffiths, "Stories and storytelling in the *Histories*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 132-135.

26 Hdt. I 56-68.

27 Odiseja 1, 3 red.

following books he uses Homer's style from the *Iliad* and recounts events celebrating the heroes of a great conflict.<sup>28</sup> It is these first four books that offer a wealth of information about peoples who were still unknown to the Greeks, and whose countries Herodotus visited on his travels. The fact that Herodotus very often refers to Homer in his writing attests to Homer's influence on Herodotus' style.<sup>29</sup>

Data collection by means of observation, interviews and records of oral traditions is a good example of Herodotus' manner of presenting historical truth in order to more accurately describe and create a clearer picture of what he wants to present to the readers.

#### **IV. Excerpts of travelogues by Herodotus**

Herodotus is a curious Ionian traveller who saw and described many landscapes and cities on his travels from Media and Persia to southern Italy, from Olbia to Elephantine, giving reports about the miraculous Russian steppes, but also the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and India.<sup>30</sup> We will present in this paper only certain passages from his *Histories* which clearly show that there are passages that can be recognized and which, excluded from his work, could represent independent stories or narratives and, in their essence, could be classified as travelogues. Most of these stories containing the characteristics of travelogues are related to the description of Persia. It is important to state that Herodotus gives more, or at least as much space, to Persia as to Greece. This is best seen from his descriptions of events in the lives of important figures in the history of Persia. We learn much more about Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes than, for instance, about Themistocles or Leonidas. Similarly, Herodotus writes more extensively about Babylon or Egypt in general, than he writes about the Greek poleis of Athens and Sparta.<sup>31</sup> To some extent, this is understandable, because his readers need to be informed more about, until then, unknown peoples and their rulers or famous people in the field of culture and religion, than about famous Greeks, Greek poleis and Greek customs. A detailed description of personalities from the life of Persia, and especially rulers in its rich

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28 A. Griffiths, *Stories and storytelling in the Histories*, 135.

29 Hdt IV 29.

30 O. Luhtar, M. Šašel Kos, N. Grošelj, G. Pobežin, *Povest istorijske misli. Od Homera do početka 21. veka. Delo I*, 52; M. Đurić, *Istorija belenske književnosti*, 417.

31 M. Flower, "Herodotus and Persia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 274.

history, shows us that Herodotus perfectly understands their political influence and their rule, especially when it is related to the descriptions of countries and areas conquered by these rulers.<sup>32</sup> There are many examples of how he achieves that and how those stories are woven into the political relations of the states, and one of the most common is when the ruler sends envoys to the area he needs to conquer, or asks who he should wage war with.<sup>33</sup> Most of these stories about the geography and ethnography of these peoples were written by Herodotus from an autopsy, and thus can serve as an example of travel literature. We must note that political influence in Herodotus' writing must not be ruled out. We must not ignore the fact that Herodotus writes from a European experience and has a Eurocentric attitude in describing the conflict between Greeks and barbarians, which influences the formation of attitudes about the countries he describes, because examples are adapted to his experience and very often compare barbarian beliefs and customs with the beliefs and customs of the Greeks. Travel literature as a genre and the travel experience gained by Herodotus can hardly change if they were shaped by these political factors, with his views often being subject to these factors when it comes to transferring information from one culture to another, or in comparison with another culture.<sup>34</sup> It is for that reason that there are difficulties in the reconstruction of certain events surrounding the Greco-Persian wars.

Since Herodotus presents himself as the author-traveller who is able to see the bigger picture,<sup>35</sup> it would be best to present here a few examples that confirm that we can also treat him as a travel writer.

### A. Egypt

Of all the foreign lands, Herodotus was most interested in Egypt. As a true lover of Egypt, he travelled by boat along the banks of the Nile to Elephantine<sup>36</sup> and left us beautiful descriptions of pyramids, temples and tombs, but also stories about the religion and customs of the Egyptians. Herodotus devoted the entire second book of his *Histories* to Egypt. In

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32 T. Rood, "Herodotus and foreign lands," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 294.

33 Hdt I 56.

34 X. Guillaume, "Travelogues of Difference: IR theory and Travel Literature," *Alternatives: global, Local, Political* 36:2 (2011): 139-140.

35 R. Friedman, *Location and dislocation in Herodotus*, 166-167.

36 Hdt II 29.

the first 98 chapters he writes about geography, customs and religion, whereas in the remaining chapters writes about Egyptian history up to the time of Amasis (16<sup>th</sup> dynasty, 664-525 BC). Parts of his second book are a great example of how Herodotus collects his data and how important this is in confirming the claim that his work can be viewed in part as a travelogue.

The first important fact is that Herodotus himself makes a difference between the events described in the book that, on the one hand, he saw himself or learned of by means of interviews, and, on the other hand, those that others told him about. In both cases, we have data on buildings, customs and religion, with the difference that the second part is dedicated to the presentation of the history of Egypt, with the help of Egyptian priests as the main source of information.

Another important fact is that, on several occasions in the second book, Herodotus writes about all the places in which he stayed. In addition to Egyptian cities of Thebes<sup>37</sup> and Heliopolis,<sup>38</sup> he also mentions that he visited the city of Tyre<sup>39</sup> in Phoenicia and Arabia.<sup>40</sup> This, too, is an indication that his primary intention was to investigate the facts on his own and that he perceived traveling to the most distant places not as a burden, but an obligation.

Herodotus was certainly fascinated by Egypt and even wrote on several instances that the Egyptians were smarter than the Hellenes which was unusual at the time. A good example of this is when he writes about the Egyptian calendar.

But as regarding human affairs, this was the account in which they all agreed: the Egyptians, they said, were the first men who reckoned by years and made the year to consist of twelve divisions of the seasons. They discovered this from the stars (so they said). And their reckoning is, to my mind, a juster one than that of the Greeks; for the Greeks add an intercalary month every other year, so that the seasons may agree; but the Egyptians, reckoning thirty days to each of the twelve months, add five days in every year over and above

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37 Hdt II 3; Hdt II 55.

38 Hdt II 3.

39 Hdt II 44.

40 Hdt II 75.

the number, and so the completed circle of seasons is made to agree with the calendar.<sup>41</sup>

He further does not hide his enthusiasm when he writes about the buildings he saw in Egypt. The first example is when he writes about the pyramids. The fact that its construction lasted for twenty years speaks of its size.

The pyramid itself was twenty years in the making. Its base is square, each side eight hundred feet long, and its height is the same; the whole is of stone polished and most exactly fitted; there is no block of less than thirty feet in length.<sup>42</sup>

Another example is when he writes about a labyrinth that he claims is the largest building he has ever seen and surpasses even the pyramids.

Moreover they resolved to preserve the memory of their names by some joint enterprise; and having so resolved they made a labyrinth, a little way beyond the lake Moeris and near the place called the City of Crocodiles. I have myself seen it, and indeed no words can tell its wonders; were all that Greeks have builded and wrought added together the whole would be seen to be a matter of less labour and cost than was this labyrinth, albeit the temples at Ephesus and Samos are noteworthy buildings. Though the pyramids were greater than words can tell, and each one of them a match for many great monuments built by Greeks, this maze surpasses even the pyramids.<sup>43</sup>

If it has already been stated that one of the reasons why Greeks travelled to unknown lands is the desire to learn from older civilizations, then the example of Egypt shows that Herodotus pays the most attention to the unusual things that do not exist in Greece. In addition to the buildings and other temples that fascinated him, he was delighted with many unusual Egyptian customs that were not characteristic of the

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41 Hdt II 4.

42 Hdt II 124.

43 Hdt II 148.

Greeks, such as the veneration of sacred animals<sup>44</sup> or embalming the dead,<sup>45</sup> and, ultimately, the Nile.<sup>46</sup>

All this leads to the conclusion that we can accept the opinion of D. Stefanović when he says that Herodotus' experience of Egypt is deeply contradictory and that this is a country that fascinates him, but, at the same time, one that is distant and disliked.<sup>47</sup> It does not fit into the form and way of life that was common for Herodotus in Greece.

The extent to which Egypt is fascinating and how frequently the pyramids, tombs and temples have been visited over the centuries is best shown by an inscription, more precisely a graffiti, from the Valley of the Kings, which states: "Those who have not seen this place have never seen anything: blessed are they who visit this place."<sup>48</sup>

### *B. Babylon*

The information we find about Babylon with Herodotus also contains the characteristics of a travelogue. He writes about Babylon in the first and third books. Of importance for this paper are the parts of the first book where Herodotus describes the way Cyrus conquered Babylon. In addition to the description of the conquest of Babylon, Herodotus presents us with a picture of the city and its most beautiful buildings. Although he did not explicitly state that he visited the city, it is obvious that he describes what he saw himself. This can also be applied when he writes about the irrigation system, whereas when he writes about the wealth of the city and the customs of the inhabitants of Babylon, he uses information from conversations with the local population, mostly priests.

Herodotus sees Babylon as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. He gives a very detailed description of the city and is fascinated by its size.

Babylon was a city such as I will now describe. It lies in a great plain, and is in shape a square, each side an hundred and twenty furlongs in length; thus four hundred and eighty

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44 Hdt II 65-76.

45 Hdt II 85-90.

46 Hdt II 19-34.

47 D. Stefanović, "Helenska opažanja Egipta" [Hellenic views of Egypt], *Zbornik Matice srpske za klasične studije* 8 (2006): 61.

48 CIG III 4821; D. Stefanović. *Helenska opažanja Egipta*, 68.

furlongs make the complete circuit of the city. Such is the size of the city of Babylon; and it was planned like no other city whereof we know. Round it runs first a fosse deep and wide and full of water, and then a wall of fifty royal cubits' thickness and two hundred cubits' height.<sup>49</sup>

Herodotus also emphasizes the size of the city when he describes the buildings in Babylon. He gives special attention to the large walls, public buildings and unusual pyramids, known as the ziggurats, which, unlike the Egyptian pyramids, serve as temples.

These walls are the city's outer armour; within them there is another encircling wall, well-nigh as strong as the other, but narrower. In the midmost of one division of the city stands the royal palace, surrounded by a high and strong wall; and in the midmost of the other is still to this day the sacred enclosure of Zeus Belus, a square of two furlongs each way, with gates of bronze. In the centre of this enclosure a solid tower has been built, of one furlong's length and breadth; a second tower rises from this, and from it yet another, till at last there are eight. The way up to them mounts spirally outside all the towers; about halfway in the ascent is a halting place, with seats for repose, where those who ascend sit down and rest. In the last tower there is a great shrine; and in it a great and well covered couch is laid, and a golden table set hard by. But no image has been set up in the shrine, nor does any human creature lie therein for the night, except one native woman, chosen from all women by the god, as say the Chaldaeans, who are priests of this god.<sup>50</sup>

Another building particularly fascinated Herodotus. He describes it as a magnificent monument. Namely, he writes that Queen Nitocris constructed brick banks on the river Euphrates in the city and built a bridge of hewn stone in the middle of the city. This was an exceptional feat of the citizens of Babylon, with the construction of the bridge especially fascinating for Herodotus because it resisted the great power of the Euphrates.

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49 Hdt II 178.

50 Hdt I 181.

But the queen provided also for this; when the digging of the basin of the lake was done, she made another monument of her reign out of this same work. She had very long blocks of stone hewn; and when these were ready and the place was dug, she turned the course of the river wholly into it, and while it was filling, the former channel being now dry, she bricked with baked bricks, like those of the wall, the borders of the river in the city and the descents from the gates leading down to the river; also about the middle of the city she built a bridge with the stones which had been dug up, binding them together with iron and lead. She laid across it square-hewn logs each morning, whereon the Babylonians crossed; but these logs were taken away for the night, lest folk should be ever crossing over and stealing from each other. Then, when the basin she had made for a lake was filled by the river and the bridge was finished, Nitocris brought the Euphrates back to its former channel out of the lake; thus she had served her purpose, as she thought, by making a swamp of the basin, and her citizens had a bridge ready for them.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, it is important to mention one very interesting example, not common for the Hellenes, that appears both in the description of Egypt and in the description of the city of Babylon. It is the question of irrigation. On his travels, Herodotus correctly concluded that the proximity of the river was crucial for the development of these civilizations<sup>52</sup>, and that their development was, ultimately, enabled by the irrigation system.

For even though a man has not before been told it he can at once see, if he have sense, that that Egypt to which the Greeks sail is land acquired by the Egyptians, given them by the river - not only the lower country but even all the land to three days' voyage above the aforesaid lake, which is of the same nature as the other, though the priests added not this to what they said.<sup>53</sup>

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51 Hdt I 186.

52 Hdt I 5.

53 Hdt II 5.

There is but little rain in Assyria. It is this which nourishes the roots of the corn; but it is irrigation from the river that ripens the crop and brings the grain to fulness : it is not as in Egypt, where the river itself rises and floods the fields: in Assyria they are watered by hand and by swinging beams. For the whole land of Babylon, like Egypt, is cut across by canals. The greatest of these is navigable: it runs towards where the sun rises in winter, from the Euphrates to another river, the Tigris, by which stood the city of Nmus. This land is of all known to us by far the most fertile in corn.<sup>54</sup>

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Based on all the above, we notice that at the time when Herodotus wrote, there was no rigid separation of genres such as geography, ethnography, history of religion, culturology, philosophy or historiography.<sup>55</sup> That is why today it is possible to look for the characteristics of other genres, such as travelogues, in Herodotus' work. Essentially, Herodotus did travel and describe what he saw on those trips, but he also weaved that description into the story of the history of the Greco-Persian wars. Regardless of the fact that with Herodotus we can notice many different literary and stylistic characteristics and genres that classify him as a logographer, ethnographer, geographer, philosopher, culturologist and as we saw in this paper, as a travel writer, he will still be remembered in historiography as the first historian because of three basic principles: he strives for the truth, criticizes oral traditions and arranges the material according to a unique universal-historical point of view, i.e. he shows the collision of the East and the West. All the other characteristics that we find in Herodotus are just a confirmation that he is an excellent writer of great abilities who in single work managed to unite many different styles and ways of transmitting historical events to future readers. His genius did not go unnoticed even by ancient historians, when Dionysius of Halicarnassus described Herodotus' style as a combination of many historical works that include different places and different times, and

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54 Hdt I 193.

55 S. Sheehan, *A Guide to Reading Herodotus' Histories* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 9.

which Herodotus managed to transform into the history of the then known world.<sup>56</sup> Precisely because of the diversity of information that Herodotus gives us, using different styles and methods of communicating past events, we are today able to interpret his work in several different ways. That is why we find so many similarities with classic travelogues.

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<sup>56</sup> E. Bakker, "The syntax of *historiē*: How Herodotus writes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 94.

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