

# The Historical Method of Herodotus



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Herodotus was the first writer in the West to conceive the value of creating a record of the recent past. He found a way to co-ordinate the often conflicting data of history, ethnology, and culture. The Historical Method of Herodotus explores the intellectual habits and the literary principles of this pioneer writer of prose. Donald Lateiner argues, against the perception that Herodotus' work seems amorphous and ill organized, that the Histories contain their own definition of historical significance. He examines patterns of presentation and literary structure in narratives, speeches, and direct communications to the reader, in short, the conventions and rhetoric of history as Herodotus created it. This rhetoric includes the use of recurring themes, the relation of speech to reported actions, indications of doubt, stylistic idiosyncrasies, frequent reference to nonverbal behaviours, and strategies of opening and ending. Lateiner shows how Herodotus sometimes suppresses information on principle and sometimes compels the reader to choose among contending versions of events. His inventories of Herodotus' methods allow the reader to focus on typical practice, not misleading

exception. In his analysis of the structuring concepts of the Histories, Lateiner scrutinizes Herodotean time and chronology. He considers the historian's admiration for ethnic freedom and autonomy, the rule of law, and the positive values of conflict. Despite these apparent biases, he argues, the text's intellectual and moral preferences present a generally cool and detached account from which an authorial personality rarely emerges. The Historical Method of Herodotus illuminates the idiosyncrasies and ambitious nature of a major text in classics and the Western tradition and touches on aspects of historiography, ancient history, rhetoric, and the history of ideas.

作者介绍:

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## 书评

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