

On the Connotation of Herodotus's Text Tracing History in the Form of Performance Narration in the Classical Social Environment

Junjie Qin^{1,†} and Jinhao Xu^{2,*,†}

¹Leipzig University, Leipzig, Germany

²Sino Canada School, Suzhou, China

*Corresponding author email: xu.1909008@sinocanda.ca

†These authors contributed equally

ABSTRACT

Based on the background that Herodotus was called "Father of History" by later generations, Herodotus was regarded as the first person to describe epic, and his work History was also included as an important document for studying ancient history. This article mainly discusses from what perspective "I" in Herodotus's texts describes various historical events, and how can we reasonably interpret the self-contradictory views expressed by Herodotus? How did he show the extremely abstract concept of Greek national will in the book, and we will also study the initial question, why did Herodotus write History? Based on the existing research and evaluation of Herodotus by different theories, we should not interpret the text at that time from a modern point of view, but bring it into the social context at that time to interpret it, and strive to restore the true historical events to the greatest extent. As for the description of Egypt, we will also see from the side what Herodotus expects "history" to be, and the great contribution of Herodotus's History to the modern study of ancient history.

The research significance of this article lies in analyzing Herodotus himself from various perspectives, restoring Herodotus' ideas, and how the collision between Greek national will and other nationalities affects Herodotus' description in the book, thus providing a basic method for studying History.

Keywords: Herodotus; performance narration; social environment; historical documentary

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to explain the fragmentation of Herodotus's narrative in History from different perspectives, and to analyze the contradictions and conflicts behind the collision between Greek national consciousness and other civilizations. The author discusses Herodotus' narrative style on the basis of the viewpoints given by other theories in later generations, also we will discuss the narrative style of Herodotus and combine the contents reflected in the volume to give the conjecture and viewpoint of what Herodotus wrote History based on.

The first one aims to investigate the unique text narrative method in Herodotus's History. Herodotus has described many contradictory statements in the book, such as the relationship between Egypt and Greece. However, the evaluation of this approach among later historians is divided into two schools of theories headed

by Martin Bernard and Ferlin. Based on these two schools of theories, it has a new perspective on Herodotus's narrative style. He expounded in the text from the "first perspective", but actually relayed what others said. so, we should pay attention to how Herodotus "imitated" other people's ideology and we should not pay too much attention to rhetorical devices in the text, and such imitation is more or less subjectively inclined to Greek consciousness itself, so it also explains that Herodotus himself has unique views on some things in the text.

The second part mainly attempts to analyze why Herodotus wrote history and how he described history. From the beginning of history, Herodotus mentioned that part of his writing purpose was to record human achievements and disputes between mankind. With the description of the second volume of Egypt, we will have a deeper understanding of his writing purpose. At the same time, it also reflects Herodotus's attitude towards

history in Egypt. It also describes what criteria he used to criticize the things and people he recorded.

The third part shows how Herodotus really defines history from different perspectives. The fragmented account mentioned above can most intuitively reflect the instability of history by what he writes. In the Egyptian volume, the eternal and mythical narrative reflects his view that history should be based on steady rules, and the ideology he imitates is included, beyond the past, the future, and the present.

Through the above three views, this paper maintains that Herodotus's history not only describes history and his views, but also show the embodiment of ancient Greek culture, politics and national will. Taking Greek culture itself as the base, he prompted him to describe the differences and even conflicts between different countries and nations, which explains why there are contradictions in the text.

2.HERODOTUS'S TEXT FROM THE PEPPECTIVE OF NEW HISTORICISM

With the development of Historiography method, the narrative research methods of Herodotus texts have become diversified, which may be due to the influence of the Yearbook School on the one hand and the result of the development of global historiography on the other. People no longer study Herodotus's texts from the central perspective, but the de-authoritative research way makes us put the research perspective on a more specific analysis of the texts themselves and the contents behind them.

Herodotus describes a lot of customs and cultures of nationalities except Greeks in History, but Herodotus's description of neighboring nationalities is full of contradictions. This is most obvious in the second volume. In the second volume, Herodotus describes everything about Egypt and Egyptians, but he first narrates that everything in Egypt is completely opposite to other nationalities. After that, he wrote about all the festivals and ceremonies. The forms of celebrations came from Egypt, and even the Greek gods originally came from Egypt.

For this contradictory description, contemporary historians' evaluation of Herodotus is inadvertently divided into two groups. The school represented by Martin Bernard, the author of *Black Athena*, believes that Herodotus sought the origin of the Greek nation in Egypt [1]. The school, represented by Detlev Ferling, thinks that the different race stories described by Herodotus are actually an extension of Greek ideas [2]. There are many original materials that can support these two factions. But in fact, these two kinds of researchers have a deeper and more critical concern. That is to say, the discussion and study of Herodotus's texts must be put into the perspective of Greek tradition, so that it is possible to

restore the genuine content and attitude of Herodotus and his history.

On this point, the discussion of Herodotus's text is no longer focused on whether his text is contradictory, or whether his text tends to be alien or Greek. Although Herodotus narrates from the first perspective in history, in fact, it will be mixed with many perspectives of telling from the first perspective, but in fact it is the perspective of relaying others' content. For example, in the second volume, Herodotus will use such rhetoric as "the following views come from the Egyptian Agnes people" and "this was told by the Egyptian priest himself". Actually, this is linked to Herodotus' time environment, although there is no direct evidence to prove that Herodotus personally performed some fragments of his works. However, in the classical period, if a writer wants to publicize his works, he must deliver speeches or perform his works in the theater to achieve the purpose of publicity. For this universal purpose, we can regard Herodotus's text as a kind of "performance narration". Thus, the research on the symbol of the text itself under the Greek tradition came into being.

In recent years, with the gradual rise of new historicism [3], Herodotus's text research presents a more comprehensive perspective of interpretation. At the same time, it avoids paying too much attention to rhetoric and turns text research into a process like word games. Therefore, from the perspective of ideology, the way to interpret Herodotus's text appears. Based on the perspective of returning to Greek tradition, Herodotus's text is regarded as "performance narration". Herodotus's contradictory narratives are interpreted as an imitation of the collision of different ideologies [4].

In this process, Herodotus himself only assumed the role of a narrator, and the real narrators were Herodotus "audiences". Herodotus's text narration is actually the imitation of the whole Greek society's ideology. In this imitation, there is bound to be a conflict of views that tends to be different race and Greek. However, in another process, the performance narration itself is to attract the audience, so it is necessary to establish a narrative authority to guide the audience's emotions, which can also reasonably explain that some things described in Herodotus's text in his own tone have Herodotus's own unique cognition of events. This is also reflected in the second volume. In the opening part, Herodotus focused on the geomorphological environment of the Nile River and Egypt. When discussing the origin of Egypt, Herodotus gave many narrators' opinions of different races and professions. These views represent the ideological collision of the audience. After these narratives, Herodotus also gave his own opinion. Thus, the narrative authority of Herodotus's texts has been formed. These different narrative angles together form Herodotus's unique textual narrative.

3. EGYPTIAN NARRATION IN THE HISTORY AND HERODOTUS'S WRITING PURPOSE

Based on text research and various viewpoints being carried out in these academic circles.

We can attempt to explain the real purpose of why Herodotus wrote *The Histories*. Although the imitation of ideology is a more reasonable view, we can't conclude whether there was such a concept as ideology or something similar to ideology in the classical period.

In the Book I, Herodotus gave part of his purpose of writing *The Histories*:

in order that so the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown [5].

In this passage, Herodotus specifically mentioned two reasons which were 'saving the past' and 'finding out why they worried about each other'. In the subsequent specific writing, each volume is full of these contents. But it usually appeared in a discontinuous manner in *The Histories*. In Book II, it covers all the writing purposes mentioned by Herodotus at the beginning of his works. Recently, some scholars called the writing content and way of Herodotus Book II an Egyptian Narrative, and the whole works of Herodotus were seen as a further extension of the Egyptian Narrative. Between Book II and Egyptian Narrative, we can also expose Herodotus's true understanding of the concept of history hidden in the text.

Before analyzing the real purpose of Herodotus's writing, what we need to understand is that his writing style was full of mythological narration and a large number of prophetic plots left over from Homer's era. But beyond that, there was also the narration which is called Herodotus's style existed in his work, which is regarded as "unbiased" narration in modern view.

First is the point about 'saving the past' in Herodotus works. This point has been mentioned many times and repeatedly in Book II. In the description of Egyptian geography, Herodotus pointed out that the Egypt region existed long before mankind, or there were different opinions on the length of the Nile. These are confirmed that with the level of human cognition at that time, it is impossible to explore how ancient Egypt was. In other words, Egypt itself is eternal from the human perspective. Another point is his continuing description of Egyptian mythology in Book II. Here he mentioned that the names of Twelve Gods among the Greek gods came from Egypt, and Hercules was not the name of a mortal hero in Egypt, but the name of a God. This directly points out that Egypt has not only eternity, but also a symbol of sanctity.

Herodotus used many views from different ethnicities to prove and emphasize the inherent eternity and sanctity of Egypt. On one hand, that was aimed at proving the ancient of Egypt and through the emphasis on Egypt to complete the traceability of Greece. But if we focus on the first 3 chapters of book II, In these chapters, the Egyptian Pharaoh failed to prove the Egyptians were the most ancient people in the world. Although Egyptians can't prove their ancient, Herodotus still mentioned Egyptian eternity and sanctity many times. Because after chapter 3, Herodotus mentioned that these seemingly mythical histories are known only to the Egyptians. Even if they are not the oldest people, their way of dealing with things and their understanding of the world is enough to prove their antiquity.

Second is the point about 'found out why they warred against each other' in Herodotus works. This is reflected in the Book II of Herodotus's narrative of the history of the kings of Egypt, from the first Pharaoh Min to Amasis. But this is different from the very detailed introduction of "Homer's ship table". Here Herodotus uses the discontinuous fragment narrative to narrate the history of Egypt from several representative Pharaohs.

When Herodotus recorded these Pharaohs, he paid attention to their achievements, and judged whether they were great or not, depending on how many temples they had built and whether they respected their gods. It can be said that this is the Egyptian ideology in Herodotus' view. Which is a kind of stability that includes eternity and sanctity, but this stability is often broken by instabilities such as violation of rules and death.

4. VERTICAL INTERPRETATION OF HERODOTUS'S TEXT

This kind of unstable and discontinuous Herodotus narration constitutes a superficial "history".

That is the most direct feeling that Herodotus's text shows us. If Lacan's theory is used to explain this phenomenon, then this superficial history is a "substitute and return of repression". The instability and discontinuity which hide under the surface is the real attitude to history from Herodotus. From the above analysis of the Book II of *History*, we can see that Herodotus believes that real history should be based on eternal rules. All the changes of the historical events, the building and fall of the ancient countries, are all eventually pointed to these eternal rules.

The analysis of this perpetual rule itself is what Herodotus wants to describe in *History*. Such a rule, in Herodotus's view, may be an eternal and rarely changing order, which belongs to the history of history itself. The history deduced on the basis of this order includes war and change, which belongs to human history.

The Homeric mythological style's writing in Herodotus's text is the embodiment of this eternal rule. Because in Herodotus's time. History, like the time of origin of Egypt, is beyond the scope of human cognition. When Herodotus wanted to show the exterior interior relationship between eternal rules and discontinuous and unstable fragments, he used a form consistent with the tradition of ancient Greek society, in the name of oracles and operas.

5. THE WRITING SIGNIFICANCE OF HERODOTUS'S TEXT FROM A HORIZONTAL PERSPECTIVE

The imitation of audience ideology can only be said to be a part of the real history understood by Herodotus. In the above-mentioned rules of eternity, we include the past, present and future of Herodotus's era, and is displayed in the common memory of an ethnic group.

What Herodotus wants to express is beyond the era itself, which is not only a part of the common memory of the Greek ethnic group in his era, but also a part of the common memory of the Greek ethnic group since the collapse of the bronze age [6].

5.1. HERODOTUS'S TEXT IS A RECONSTRUCTION OF PAST MEMORY

The mythical description of the past is the result of the vague collective memory caused by the cultural collapse of the bronze age, but it also inherits Homer's style, that is, to recall the cultural collapse of the Bronze Age in this mythical way [7].

It symbolizes the great impact on the eternal rules, but it still retains the self-identity of the Greek ethnic groups. Although it is a mythological description, it is used to describe the king in ancient times. That symbolizes the ancient Greeks deliberately seek to trace the history of their own ethnic groups, and build their ethnic groups' superiority with mythical backtracking [8].

5.2. HERODOTUS'S TEXT IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF CLASSICAL GREEK NATIONAL CONCEPT

The narrative writing of his writing age is Herodotus's imitation of the collision of Greek ideology [9].

The emergence of the great immigration movement, which led to the collapse of bronze culture, made the classical writers of this period have great interest in ethnographic writing. The attitude towards alien race can be seen from *The Birth of Tragedy* from Nietzsche, which is essentially the pursuit of a primitive impulse. Nietzsche also mentioned that there is an insurmountable gap between barbarian drama and Greek drama [10].

The ethnographic writing in this period didn't mean Herodotus is inclined or biased towards barbarians. Instead, it was aimed to build the Greek ethnicity itself. This prompted Herodotus to describe other ethnicity, and this "inclusiveness" was based on the "exclusivity" of the Greek ethnicity itself.

However, other classical writers of the same period also expressed the view that human beings are not divided into nationalities, which is the ideological inclusiveness produced by the cultural recovery and the diversification of the situation on the peninsula in the Herodotus era.

But in essence, the construction of the Greek ethnicity in this period is based on "exclusivity", because the Greek nation is in a period of relative political hegemony.

5.3. HERODOTUS'S TEXT FINALLY POINTS TO THE FUTURE WITH A RETROSPECTIVE WAY

The description of the future which appeared in the text in the form of Oracle. Some of the Oracle were hid in the mythological writing and these had been fulfilled. For example, King Lydia received the Oracle before the war against the Persian Empire. Although the Oracle prophesied that a great power would perish, King Lydia's wrong interpretation of the Oracle made the prophecy come true. Some of the Oracle's predictions in this text have not yet been fulfilled, but Herodotus finally believes that these predictions will come true. Because in his understanding of history, although the future is not directional, it is still a retrospective pursuit of the past. Herodotus's imitation of Greek ideology is just a manifestation of the Greek nation's pursuit of primitive impulse. This embodiment in the cognitive construction of Greek ethnic groups is a presentation before the foundation. From this point of view, the eternal rules seem to be derived from the process of cognitive construction. But in fact, it is the existence of eternal rules that makes all this point to the future in a reverse and retrospective way in the process of recall and imitation.

Every description of the past and contemporary was Herodotus and his time tried to attempt to reconstruct the eternal rules and the Greek ethnic identity in the wave of cultural revival and the reconstruction of political order after the collapse of the bronze age. In this way, he created a subject which the later generation called history, a narrative structure that points to the future in retrospective and contradictory narration.

6. CONCLUSION

Through the discussion of each chapter of this paper, this paper brings the narrative techniques in Herodotus's history into the social context for interpretation from different perspectives [11], which combines the text narrative with the overall Greek culture, and gives a

reasonable explanation for Herodotus's contradictory text to the greatest extent. What's more, this paper describes from three aspects: Herodotus's performance narrative and Greek ideology, the real purpose of Herodotus's writing, and the history in Herodotus's eyes.

Based on the theories of Martin Bernard and Ferrin, we can find that Herodotus's narrative method is not a simple first person, but uses a "performance narrative" to simulate what others say. In fact, the "I" in Herodotus's text is not the embodiment of the author's own subject will, but through the text to imitate what others say to shape an ideology, and different ideologies are mixed with the ideologies of Herodotus and the Greeks themselves through imitation, resulting in self contradictory narrative techniques.

The second part mainly attempts to analyze why Herodotus wrote history and how he described history. Although the imitation of ideology is a good reason, we can't determine whether there is such a concept as ideology in the classical period, so we still need to return to the content of the text itself. Herodotus has given some answers in Volume I, In order to preserve human achievements and describe the process and causes of disputes, which are mainly reflected in the Egypt chapter of Volume II. Herodotus describes the geography of Egypt and the ancient unknown of Egypt. Through the myth of the prosperity of Egypt, he shows the ancient of Egypt and emphasizes the eternity and sanctity. Secondly, the description of the Egyptian pharaoh reflects his own critical thinking, and all the descriptions of Egypt are the embodiment of Egyptian will in his write.

Following the above ideas, the third chapter expounds how to define history in Herodotus's eyes through vertical and horizontal comparison, the fragmented records in the text, and the breaking of Egypt's eternity and sanctity with death. A series of unstable narratives appear in Herodotus's "history", and through his own description of Egypt, It is not difficult to see that the real history in his eyes should be based on eternal and stable rules. The history, changes and wars deduced on the rules are very orderly because of such a rule, which is what he really thinks of history. At the same time, through the imitation of ideology, he attributes this ideology to the above eternal rules, Therefore, the ideology he describes transcends the times, the present, the past and the future. At the same time, the imitation of Greek ideology also urges him to compare the ideologies of other cultures. The conflict and collision between different ideologies show his contradictory narrative techniques.

From the above three aspects, it is true that Herodotus's history is limited by the context, social culture, or his subjective views on historical events, resulting in some views that are not objective enough. However, this is still the best "textbook" for the study of cultural differences and practice between Greece and other countries in BC [12], At the same time, putting the

seemingly contradictory text into different historical contexts for reasonable interpretation is also very helpful and meaningful for the study of history. We should not simply regard history as the author's own creation. The text reflects the conflict between social cultures at that time. We should go deep into the reasons and stories behind the text with the question of self contradiction, for restoring the most real historical events, and the book history has shaped not only Herodotus's unique point of view, but also the embodiment of Greek national will and the description of the collision of different social and cultural systems.

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