

**WEEK SEVEN:**  
**The Barbarians – Ethnographies I**

**Tuesday: Scythians I: The Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places***

Tuesday's reading comes from the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*. This work is one of the earliest texts from the Hippocratic corpus, which as a whole comprises around 60 works from multiple authors from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE to perhaps the early 3<sup>rd</sup>. The various texts that make up the corpus contain a wide variety of information about Greek medical and scientific practices, from aphorisms describing diagnostic information, to detailed case histories, to the now famous Hippocratic *Oath*. The treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* (*AWP*) was likely composed at an early stage in the development of the Hippocratic tradition and may, in fact, have been composed by Hippocrates himself. *AWP* explains the effects that physical geography and climate have on the human body and health. The text seems to be protreptic in nature, meaning that it aims to convince the audience of the truth of the author's contentions and to persuade the audience to support the author. Scholars think that the protreptic nature of many of the Hippocratic texts is meant to draw students to the schools of the authors (or an older and less likely explanation is that the texts aimed to draw patients to visit the physicians).

The first half of *AWP* (chapters 1-11) sets out a method to explain the expected effects that each type of climate has on human health. The author suggests that such a knowledge is useful for a physician setting out into a new city. The text describes how various aspects of winds, waters, and topography (strong or calm, hot or cold, wet or dry, north-, south-, east-, or west-facing) produce specific and predictable results on the human body. The second half of the text (which we will be reading) provides evidence in support of these arguments by describing the qualities of the various peoples in extreme climates. After a section on Egyptians and Libyans (now lost), the author explains in great detail some of the qualities and customs of the Scythians. This portion of the work is one of the earliest examples of ethnographic writing in the ancient world.

After you read the description of the Scythians in *AWP*, read Herodotus' brief descriptions of the Anaries/Enarees, a group that appears in the Hippocratic text as well. Compare the explanations of the origins of the Anaries' disease in each text.

**Assignment:**

- **Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places* xii-xxiv** (= Jones trans., pp. 105-137-odd pages only)
- **Herodotus, *Histories* 1.104-106** (=Landmark pp. bottom of 59-top of 61)
- Since this is a shorter assignment than usual, you should definitely get a head start on Thursday's reading (which is longer than the norm).

**Reading Questions:**

- What does the author suggest about the connections between physical geography and climate and a group's physical characteristics and behavior?
- What has the most effects on the Scythians physical characteristics: climate, geography, or behavior?
- What sorts of characteristics and behaviors are of interest to the author?
- Are there elements of the text that are surprising to see in a scientific or medical treatise?

### Thursday: Herodotus the Ethnographer: Scythians II and Greeks vs. Foreigners

You have already noticed the digressive nature of Herodotus' *Histories*. One common element of his digressions is ethnographic material. His ethnographies often appear the first time an *ethnos* (ethnic group) becomes heavily involved in the historian's narrative. For instance, Herodotus digresses on the ethnography of the Persians when Cyrus becomes king over the formerly Median Empire. The Egyptian ethnography takes up the larger part of the second book of the *Histories*, as Herodotus just begins to narrate the Persian campaign to conquer Egypt. For Thursday, we will read a number of these ethnographies.

First, read the story of Darius testing the force of custom on Greek and Indian behavior (3.38), which leads him to quote the poet Pindar, who claims that "custom (*nomos*) is king of all." Then, read the lengthy ethnography of the Scythians, divided up into two chunks. The first lays out the basic details of their customs. The second links up the last few customs with Herodotus' continuation of his narrative. Consider how the Scythians' behavior in those first few sections of the resumed narrative compare to the behaviors laid out in their ethnography. Next, read the shorter ethnographies selected (on Lydians, Persians, and the Massagetai) and then a very brief summary of Egyptian customs (for the fuller ethnography, see below). The final two selections of the assignment are as close as Herodotus comes to giving an ethnography of any of the Greeks. As is usual, this assignment is shorter than it looks (with a lot of maps and images taking up some of the page ranges), but it is still *very long*, so you should start early if you can.

Finally, I have included below a number of optional readings of other ethnographies that appear in the *Histories* that may be of interest.

#### Assignment:

- **Scythians II: Herodotus, *Histories* 4.1-82** (= Landmark pp. 281-very top of 317); **4.99-122** (= Landmark pp. 323-330)
- **Greeks vs. Foreigners: Herodotus, *Histories: Nomos is King*: 3.38** (= Landmark p. 224); **Lydians 1.94** (= Landmark pp. 55-56); **Persians 1.131-40** (= Landmark pp. bottom of 71-74); **Massagetai 1.215-216** (= Landmark p. 114); **Egyptians** (in brief) **2.35-57** (= Landmark pp. 133-34); **Greeks in Asia: 1.142-51** (= Landmark pp. 75-82); **Early Greeks: 1.56-58** (= Landmark pp. 32-top of 33)
- **OPTIONAL READINGS** (if you are interested in other Herodotean ethnographies): **Mesopotamians** (including Babylon) **1.193-200** (=Landmark pp. 103-107); **Egyptians** (full ethnography) **2.35-98** (=Landmark pp. 133-57); **Libyans 4.168-198** (=Landmark pp. 351-362)

#### Reading Questions:

- What are the primary characteristics that Herodotus is interested in as he constructs these ethnographies? What aspects of these peoples' lives, cultures, languages, and traditions does he commonly recount?
- What would you think is *missing*?—i.e.—What would you expect to find in an ethnography that is not present?
- How does Herodotus define these groups of people as distinct from the Greeks? What makes them *Barbaroi* and Greeks, Greek?
- Does Herodotus distinguish separate groups or individuals within each of these ethnic groups? If so, what sorts of things can define these sub-groups?

- Think back on what we know of these cultures based on what we have read of the *Histories*: Are there links between the ethnographies Herodotus records for them and how these groups behave in the narrative?
- What does the Pindar quote in Hdt. 3.38—“custom (*nomos*) is king of all”—add to our interpretation of the Herodotean ethnographies?

**People, Terms, Events and Concepts, to know from Week Seven:**

Ethnography	Cimmerians	Taurians
<i>ethnos</i>	Aristeas	Amazons
Scythians	Iyrkai	Lydians
Macrocephaloi/“Longheads”	Argippaioi	Persians
Sauromatae	Hyperboreans	Persian education
Nomads	Herodotus’ map	Massagetai death customs
Anaries/Enarees	Sataspes	Egyptians
<i>physis</i>	Ister River (Danube)	Ionians
<i>nomos</i>	Scythian Pantheon	Dorians
Targitaos	sacrificial customs	Panionion
Herakles	funerary customs	Aeolians
Massagetai	Skyles	Pelasgians