



HECATAEUS OF MILETUS

HECATAEUS OF MILETUS, a Greek author from the city of Miletus in Asia Minor (fl. between 560 and 418 B.C.E.), who is the author of a geographical survey of the regions and the peoples in the Achaemenid Empire. He is considered to be the most influential of the early Ionian prose writers (Herodotus 5.36, called him a *logopoios* “prose writer”). Hecataeus was the son of Hegesandros and probably belonged to the old nobility of Miletus. Because of his role as an adviser in the early days of the Ionian revolt (fall of 499 B.C.E.) against Persian domination, it is generally assumed that he was born before 545 B.C.E. When the circles around Aristagoras (q.v.), the tyrant of Miletus, showed determination to revolt against Darius I the Great (q.v.), Hecataeus reportedly at first warned them, without success, against such a move, reminding them of the extent of the Persian imperial territory. He later urged them, once more in vain, to strive with all possible means for mastery at sea (Herodotus 5.36). The rebels initially enjoyed a partial success in their attack on Sardis, but they were soon driven back and were later decisively defeated by a Persian counter-offensive. Hecataeus advised Aristagoras, who had decided to escape Miletus, to entrench himself on the island of Leros and wait quietly there for future developments in Miletus. His advice, however, was rejected; and Aristagoras set out for Thrace (Herodotus 5.123-25; Balcer, p. 181). After the failure of the rebellion, Hecataeus is said to have interceded with Artaphrenēs (q.v.), the great king’s brother and the satrap of Sardis since 540 B.C.E., for lenient treatment of the Ionians (Diodorus 10.25.4). Herodotus (2.143) reported a discussion between Hecataeus and the Egyptian priests at Thebes. In general, there has been a tendency to suggest that Hecataeus had



made numerous long journeys (see Jacoby), but it can not be determined with any degree of certainty to what extent his reports were really based on personal observations. Whether Hecataeus was an immediate pupil of the philosopher Anaximander of Miletus is an open question, but, in any case, he probably improved the latter's world-map and supplemented it with narrative accounts of the earth (ca. 510 B.C.E.?). It may have been Hecataeus's map, engraved on a bronze tablet, which, according to Herodotus (5.49), Aristagoras presented to King Cleomenes of Sparta in his efforts to convince the king that an attack into the heartland of Asia would bring him a great deal of riches.

Works. (a) Hecataeus is the author of *Periodos gēs* "Survey of the Earth," a world map in which the earth is viewed as a circular plate, around which flows the *Ōkeanos* "ocean" (i.e., outer river). The map was supplemented by a descriptive account (*Periēgēsis*) that was divided into two sections, *Europē* and *Asiē*. The map arranged the then accessible geographical data in a specific way. In the tradition of the *periploi* (coastal navigations), the account followed clockwise the shorelines of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea from Gibraltar back to Gibraltar, thereby displaying Asia Minor, Syria, and the entire Near East, Egypt, North Africa, the western Mediterranean lands, Greece, and South Russia (the land of the Scythians). Persia, India, and Arabia, on the other hand, were depicted along the coasts of the Outer Sea, the "Erythraean," as Hecataeus calls the Indian Ocean. Of the 374 surviving fragments of the work (see Nenci) no less than 304 derive from the geographical lexicon *Ethnika* by Stephanus of Byzantium (6th cent. C.E.). Primarily, this material contains chorographic (basic map making and reporting) information, occasionally supplemented by *aitiai* and etymologies. The question remains whether the items that have come down to us are really indicative of the original or mainly reflect the specific interests of the lexicographer (see Karttunen). Controversy has also given rise to discussion of the manner and extent to which Herodotus used the map of Hecataeus. This is despite Herodotus's own words (2.143) as well as the statement by Porphyry (ca. 300 C.E.) that two fairly lengthy passages from the second book of Herodotus's *History* have been copied verbatim from Hecataeus (Jacoby, *Fragmente*, No. 1, F 324a; idem, pp. 2728 ff.).

(b) The four Books called *Genealogiai* (also cited as *Historiai* or *Hērōologia*) probably date from some time after 500 B.C.E. They represent an attempt, in prose and in a lucid and rationally comprehensible approach, to classify and systematize the mythical era genealogically, including also his own family



traditions (Herodotus 2.143). Although only about thirty fragments of this book have survived, still the contrast it presents to the earlier “epical” systemization of mythical materials is remarkable: Not only did Hecataeus establish in this book a fixed calendrical procedure (e.g., the era of the “Return of Heraclidae”), but he also introduced the principle of credibility into the *Hellēnōn logoi* (Jacoby, 1957, I, F 1a), based on the criterion of “rational probability” (*eikos*: Jacoby, *Fragmente*, No. F 27).

See also THE IONIAN REVOLT

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