



HERODIAN

HERODIAN (fl. shortly before 250 C.E.), historian, probably a native of Syria (perhaps from Antiochia), who wrote a Greek history of the Roman emperors in eight volumes, from the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 C.E. to the accession of Gordian III in 238.

Not much is known about Herodian's life and social status, but together with Dio Cassius (q.v.) he is the only historian who was a contemporary writer of the turbulent period in the Roman Empire following the death of Marcus Aurelius (Herodian, 1.2.5) and whose work has been fully preserved to the present day. He did not care much about chronology (cf. Whittaker, p. xl), but rather was a narrator of dramatically stylized, significant episodes. As in antiquity (cf. *ibid.*, p. xxxvii), experts still vary in their opinions on his historical value. His deficiencies in chronological (e.g., the omission of Septimius Severus's first Parthian war in 195 C.E., cf. Herodian 3.5.1 ff.) or geographical (e.g., his poor knowledge of Parthia and Mesopotamia) matters notwithstanding, he is not automatically to be dismissed in favor of Dio (cf. Whittaker, p. xxxix), and his authority is preferable by far to that of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Whether he made direct use of Dio's work (which ended with the year 222) has been a matter of serious dispute, though it seems nowadays generally accepted that he did. Apart from some rare remarks on Parthian dance (Herodian 4.11.3), spices and clothes (4.10.4 f.), as well as on the army and its tactics (4.10.3; 4.15.2-4, 6), Herodian's relevance for Iranian history rests on his reports of the campaign against the Parthians by the Roman emperors Septimius Severus in 197-98 C.E. (3.9.8-12), Caracalla in



216-17 (4.11.2-8), and Severus Alexander in 231-33 (6.5.6 f.; 6.6.5), and against the Sarmatians from 236 onwards by Maximinus Trax (7.8.4) as well as of the conclusion of the peace treaty between Macrinus and Ardawān IV in 217 (4.15.6-9). Perhaps the most famous and often discussed (cf. Kettenhofen with previous literature) passage in Herodian's work is the account of the claims by Ardašir and the new Sasanian dynasty of former Persian territory as far as the Propontis from the Romans (6.2.2; cf. also 6.4.5) after the killing of the last Parthian king Ardawān IV (6.2.1, 7; 6.3.5).

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