

Oracles and the composition of Book 1 of Herodotus' *Histories*
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The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how the oracles in Book 1, which often enrich, drive or legitimize a particular episode in the *Histories*, can be mapped out to help understand the organization of that book. I mean to show that by plotting out and correlating these oracles, we are better able to see the general composition of Book 1, e.g., in relation to the often-discussed ring cycle structure employed in the *Histories*.

For example, in section 47 the "test oracle" also introduces the role of Croesus' mute son, a topic concluded with another hexameter oracle at section 85 (along with the issues of oversight and problematic priorities). The subject of the hexameter "mule oracle" at section 55 is likewise drawn to a close with the paraphrased oracle in 91, along with an emphasis on the inevitability of fate. Therefore, three of the four hexameter oracles that come within these two correlations (in 62, 65 and 66) all relate to the idea of excessive, proper and measured arrogance for the Spartans, respectively. Further, this topic of *hybris*, which is so essential to these oracles—as well as the entire *Histories*—is brought full circle in Book 1 with the final iambic oracle at 174 given to the Cnidiens regarding their own *hybris*; there are no other oracles between sections 174 and the end of Book 1. A chart of these correlations will help illustrate the "matryoshka" organization in the first book of the *Histories*. This 'map' of Book 1 can help in the classroom by providing the instructor and student with a particular structure to keep in mind while reading.

At the end of the session, I will give some very brief suggestions as to how this particular way of looking at Herodotus' oracles can be seen to illuminate the author's relationship with Homer. We do not find Homer's name in Book 1; there is no quoted verse in Book 2 other than that of Homer, i.e., we find no oracles at all. Homer and his literary choices regarding the *Iliad* are discussed in Book 2 (the book on Egypt). There is surely a reason for this, if Herodotus' audience was not used to seeing, or hearing, Homeric text alongside any other verse, even if from Delphi.

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