

A Fragment of the Ἄσσυριοι λόγοι of Herodotos

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IN THE *Historia Animalium* Aristotle remarks: τὰ μὲν οὖν γαμφώνυχα, καθάπερ εἴρηται πρότερον, ὡς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν ἄποτα πάμπαν ἐστίν (ἀλλ' †'Ἡσίοδος† ἠγνόει τοῦτο· πεποίηκε γὰρ τὸν τῆς μαντείας πρόεδρον ἀετὸν ἐν τῇ διηγῆσει τῇ περὶ τὴν πολιορκίαν τὴν Νίνου πίνοντα).¹

'Ἡσίοδος alii: ἠρόδοτος Da(Vaticanus 262). πρόεδρον: πρόσεδρον P(Vaticanus 1339). —'Ισίγονος Gutschmid (*Kleine Schriften* II [Leipzig 1890] 119). *Κτησίας* Schoell. 'Ἡρόδωρος Th. Bergk (*Griechische Literatur geschichte* IV [Berlin 1887] 258 n.66).

Bergk alternatively suggested that the story came from the Hesiodic Ὀρνιθομαντεία, but since Nineveh fell to Kyaxares the Mede in 612 B.C., it is most unlikely that Hesiod, who is reasonably supposed to have flourished about a century earlier,² mentioned the capture. Nor is a poem masquerading as Hesiod's likely to have persuaded Aristotle that Hesiod described the fall of Nineveh: for Aristotle dated Homer, who was usually thought to have been a contemporary of Hesiod,³ to the time of the Ionian migration,⁴ long before Nineveh fell. The reading 'Ἡσίοδος cannot therefore be accepted here.

If 'Ἡσίοδος is not to be read, then it does not follow that 'Ἡρόδοτος is correct, and H. Stein in his remarks upon the Ἄσσυριοι λόγοι of Herodotos left the matter undecided.⁵ A. Schoell, however, suggested that Aristotle may have written *Κτησίας* here,⁶ and it is true that a portent of a drinking eagle may have appealed to the mentality of the Knidian. But we happen to possess substantial excerpts from the Ktesian account of the taking of Nineveh,⁷ and there is no mention in

¹ *Hist. Anim.* 8.18.3 (601b): *Aristoteles* ed. Bekker IV (Oxford 1837) 287–288.

² H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 1–16.

³ e.g. Herodotos 2.53.2.

⁴ [Plutarch] *Vita Homeri* 3, quoting Aristotle, *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* Book III.

⁵ *Herodotos*⁶ I (Berlin 1901) p. 130 on Herodotos 1.106.2.

⁶ "Ueber Herodots Lebenszeit," *Philologus* 9 (1854) 208–209.

⁷ Ktesias 688 F 1, at Diodoros 2.26–27 (*FGrHist* vol. III C pp. 447–448).

them of the augury of the drinking eagle. According to Ktesias, an oracle having declared that no one would capture Nineveh unless the river first became hostile to the city, part of the walls were overthrown by a flood which enabled the Medes to enter. So we cannot assume that Ktesias mentioned the drinking eagle, and even if he did, that would not rule out the reading *Ἡρόδοτος*. The corruption of *Κτησίας* into *Ἡσίδοτος* or *Ἡρόδοτος* is not easy, moreover, but *Ἡρόδοτος* may reasonably be supposed to have been corrupted to *Ἡσίδοτος*. Thus *Ἡρόδοτος*, the reading of the Ms Da, which according to Dittmeyer (in *Praefatio* p. xiv to his edition) in the later books of the *Historia Animalium* alone preserves many true readings, stood in the archetype of our manuscripts of the *Historia Animalium*, and that is what Aristotle is most likely to have written.

Now it is a commonplace of Herodotean literary criticism that the historian twice promises to explain events of Assyrian history and twice breaks his promise. Once (1.184) he promises to describe the kings who ruled over Babylon (which he took to be part of Assyria):⁸ *τῆς δὲ Βαβυλῶνος ταύτης πολλοὶ μὲν κού καὶ ἄλλοι ἐγένοντο βασιλεῖες, τῶν ἐν τοῖσι Ἀσσυρίοισι λόγοισι μνήμην ποιήσομαι, οἳ τὰ τεῖχεά τε ἐπεκόσμησαν καὶ τὰ ἱρά, ἐν δὲ δὴ γυναῖκες δύο:* the two women, Semiramis and Nitokris, are mentioned (1.184–185.1), but there is no excursus devoted to the kings who ruled over Babylon. Earlier (1.106.2) he states that the Medes took Nineveh—“how they captured it I shall show elsewhere”: *καὶ τὴν τε Νίνον εἶλον (ὡς δὲ εἶλον, ἐν ἑτέροισι λόγοισι δηλώσω)*. The promise is not fulfilled in the extant *Histories* of Herodotos, but it is remarkable, in view of the promise, that in the archetype of the Mss of the *Historia Animalium* Aristotle was stated to have cited Herodotos for an episode in the capture of Nineveh. Now Powell⁹ remarks, “If Aristotle wrote *Ἡσίδοτος* the corruption *Ἡρόδοτος* involves a most remarkable coincidence, whereas if he wrote *Ἡρόδοτος*, the corruption *Ἡσίδοτος* involves none.”

Of the other conjectures, V. Gutschmid’s *Ἰσίγονος* can be neglected, since Isigonos, the Nikaian author of a work *Περὶ ἀπίστων*, drew on Theophrastos and other post-Aristotelian writers.¹⁰ Bergk’s *Ἡρόδωρος* is plausible. Aristotle (*De Gen. Anim.* 3.6.6) shows that he was interested

⁸ See 1.106.2, 1.178.1, and 3.92.1; and E. Bachof, “Die Ἀσσύριοι λόγοι des Herodotos,” *NJbb* 1877, 582.

⁹ J. E. Powell, *The History of Herodotus* (Cambridge 1939) 35.

¹⁰ W. Kroll, *RE IX* (1916) 2082 s.v. *ISIGONOS* (1).

in animals and criticises his foolish opinions concerning the hyena and the creature called *τρόχος*: here one Ms (Z) even has the corruption *ηρωδοτος*. We also learn from Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* 6.5) that Herodotos, who lived about 400 B.C. and came from the Pontic Herakleia,¹¹ wrote about the γύψ in his work on Herakles, so that the reference to the drinking eagle at Nineveh in the *Historia Animalium* might be thought also to come from Herodotos. However, Aristotle does not call him 'Ηρόδωρος *tout court*, but either *ὁ Βρύσωνος τοῦ σοφιστοῦ πατήρ* or *ὁ Ἡρακλεώτης*, whereas Herodotos is simply called by him 'Ηρόδοτος¹² or, once, 'Ηρόδοτος ὁ μυθολόγος (*De Gen. Anim.* 3.5.15). Besides, Herodotos is not known to have written on subjects outside the mythology of the heroic age—a *Herakleia*, *Argonautika*, and *Pelopeia* are ascribed to him (*FGrHist* no. 31): hence it is difficult to see how he can have treated the fall of Nineveh, a relatively recent historical event. Bergk's 'Ηρόδωρος is ingenious, but not to be accepted. We conclude therefore that Aristotle wrote 'Ηρόδοτος: as we have seen, he cannot have written Hesiod's name because the chronological objection is insuperable to the reading 'Ησιόδος.

A part of the Assyrian *λόγοι* of Herodotos is extant, namely the description of Babylon in Book I.¹³ Various views have been held about the missing remainder of the *λόγοι*, which, as the promises of Herodotos show, would have discussed the capture of Nineveh and the kings who ruled over Babylon, amongst other matters. Stein¹⁴ was inclined to regard the 'Ασσύριοι *λόγοι* as a lost work, parts of which were incorporated in the *Histories*, but which was originally intended to be an independent publication. J. E. Powell¹⁵ supposed that Assyrian *λόγοι* were originally written for the *History* and were placed before 3.150 but were later deleted, except for the description of Babylon in Book I. Herodotos, he believed, overlooked the forward references in the two unfulfilled promises and forgot to delete them too. Another suggestion is that the Assyrian *λόγοι* were to have been included after the point at which the unfinished ninth book termi-

¹¹ F. Jacoby, *RE* VIII (1913) 980–987 s.v. HERODOROS (4).

¹² *Eud. Eth.* 7.2.13, *Hist. Anim.* 3.22.1, *De Gen. Anim.* 2.2.11.

¹³ Ch. 188–200. See also G. De Sanctis, "La composizione della Storia di Erodoto." *RivFilClass* n.s. 4 (1926) 289–309.

¹⁴ *Herodotos*⁶ I, pp. liii–liv, § 43. E. Meyer (*Forschungen* II [Halle 1899] 198–9 n.1) thought of the 'Ασσύριοι *λόγοι* as an "Ergänzung" of the "Hauptwerke."

¹⁵ *op.cit.* 18 and 23. Powell (p. 35) claimed that Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* 8.18 (601b1ff) comes from the hypothetical "Persian history" of Herodotos, which in his analysis was a prelude to the "Persian Wars."

nates.¹⁶ The variety of suggestions shows only that certainty is not attainable, but there are signs that Herodotos had done much work in collecting and sifting facts, and what he took to be facts, about Assyrian history: he may well then have written down the information in a coherent fashion, and there is nothing *a priori* unreasonable in the evidence that Aristotle had read work by Herodotos which is no longer extant.

The chief evidence for close study of Assyrian history by Herodotos is that he had worked out a coherent Assyrian chronology. The Assyrians, he says, had ruled Upper Asia for 520 years when the Medes revolted from them (1.95.2) and Deiokes became king. Since in the Herodotean chronology Deiokes became king in 708 B.C.,¹⁷ the Assyrian empire began *ca* 1228 B.C. Now the epoch 1228 B.C. coincides with the lifetime assigned by Herodotos to king Ninus, the eponymous founder of Nineveh; for the historian tells us that the Herakleidai of Lydia ruled for 505 years until the accession of Gyges (1.7.4), who became king, according to Herodotos, in 716 B.C.¹⁸ Thus Agron, the first king of the Lydian Herakleid line, came to the throne in 1221 B.C. Agron was a son of Ninus, son of Belos (Hdt. 1.7.2): so Ninus flourished, in Herodotos' view, at the time of the founding of the Assyrian empire shortly before 1221 B.C. Thus he dates Ninus in *ca* 1228 B.C., quite consistently. Ktesias followed Herodotos in making Ninus founder of the empire, but dated him much earlier, because he held the Assyrians to have ruled for more than 1300 years.¹⁹

It is clear then that Herodotos had thought out his Assyrian chronology carefully. His date for Ninus is consistent not only with his Lydian chronology, but also with his dating of Herakles nine hundred years before his own day (2.145.4) or *ca* 1350 B.C.: for Ninus he believed to have been a great-grandson of Herakles (1.7.2) and so to have lived rather more than a century after *ca* 1350 B.C.

Here the old suggestion that the name Ninus recalls Tukulti-

¹⁶ So Ebert, *Zur Frage nach der Beendigung des Herodoteischen Geschichteswerkes* (Kiel 1911), discussed by F. Jacoby *s.v.* HERODOTOS, *RE* Suppl. II (1913) 372–376. The context for the *λόγοι* would then be the disturbances in Babylonia after the return of Xerxes from Greece (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.16.4): but this seems unduly late. The most likely context for the *λόγοι* (I think) is with the account of Babylonia in Book I: they thus would have completed Herodotos' panoramic view of the Near East, and have led on to the description of Egypt.

¹⁷ H. Strasburger, "Herodots Zeitrechnung," *Historia* 5 (1956) 136.

¹⁸ Strasburger, *op.cit.* 139–140.

¹⁹ *FGrHist* 688 F 1, 28, 8 (vol. IIIC p. 449).

Ninurta I of Assyria deserves notice.²⁰ That king conquered Babylon, deported the statue of Marduk and ruled over the city for seven years,²¹ events which are likely to have made a strong impression on the Babylonians and on their view of the past in later times; and the suggestion that Herodotos, having heard about Tukulti-Ninurta I in Babylon while making enquiries into Assyrian history, identified that great king with Ninos, whom he supposed to be the founder of the Assyrian empire, is strengthened by the observation that the *floruit* of Ninos according to Herodotos falls close to the middle of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, who was king of Assyria from 1242 to 1206 B.C. It looks then as though Herodotos when in Babylon took the opportunity to discuss chronological matters with the keepers of the archives. He then went on to link his Assyrian chronology to Lydian and early Greek dates, thus proving himself a pioneer in the Orientalists' intricate craft of synchronising king lists.

The outlines of his Assyrian king list can be discerned from passing remarks in the *Histories*. He took Sardanapalos to be a son of Ninos.²² From his Babylonian informants he heard of Semiramis (1.184), who may be a confused memory of the Babylonian wife of Shamshi-Adad V, Sammuramat; and he thought that Nitokris was queen of Babylon when Nineveh had fallen to the Medes (1.185.1). The disastrous expedition of Sanacharibos to Egypt (2.141.2) was perhaps recounted to Herodotos there, not in Babylon. Those are the only surviving royal names from the Assyrian studies of Herodotos, but his promise to relate the many kings of Babylon implies that many more names of Mesopotamian rulers were known to him. The names he intended to give in the rest of the *Ἀσσύριοι λόγοι*, and perhaps did give, even if the *λόγοι* were never included in the entirety in the *Histories*: for we do not know that all that Herodotos ever wrote survives in our version of the *Histories*. On the contrary, the likelihood is that Herodotos wrote down the evidence he had gathered in Mesopotamia, so that most of the Assyrian *λόγοι* are now lost. Whether the entire *λόγοι* once formed part of the *Histories*, or whether they were removed by Herodotos himself or fell out later, we do not know.

²⁰ It is revived by R. H. Drews, "Assyria in Classical Universal Histories," *Historia* 14 (1965) 137 n.39 and 142.

²¹ M. B. Rowton, *CAH*² vol. I ch. 6, p. 35.

²² 2.150.3. Aristotle's allusion to a plot against the effeminate Sardanapalos (*Politics* 1312a1) need not have been made with the *Ἀσσύριοι λόγοι* of Herodotos in mind: with the plot compare the conspiracy in Ktesias 688 F 1 (Diodoros 2.24.4).

We return to Aristotle's remarks in the *Historia Animalium*. Since 'Ἡρόδοτος was what he wrote, Aristotle himself had read writings of Herodotos on Assyria which no longer exist. The failure of other ancient authors to cite the lost Herodotean writings may be explained by the greater popularity of the irresponsible Ktesias, who naively claimed to have studied royal documents of the Persians²³ and, it appears, to have corrected Herodotos in all essential matters, such as the date of the fall of Nineveh.²⁴

Another ancient author *may* have known the lost Assyrian *λόγοι* of Herodotos. Eusebios²⁵ writes of Herodotos beside Hellanikos and Ktesias as though he were an authority on Assyrian king lists, and since the extant *Histories* do not include Assyrian regnal lists such as those of the Lydians in the *Λυδιακά* in Book I, it is conceivable that Eusebios had 'Ασσύριοι *λόγοι* by, or purporting to be by, Herodotos in mind.

The 'Ασσύριοι *λόγοι* then, as the historian's unfulfilled promises show, would have given an account of Assyrian history including Babylon from the founding of Nineveh by Ninus about 1228 B.C. to its capture by the Medes under Kyaxares late in the seventh century. To judge from his descriptions of other parts of the world, there would have been much geographical and ethnographic narrative as well, but of that, apart from the account of Babylon, we have no evidence. What is certain is that Aristotle had read an account by Herodotos of the fall of Nineveh which is missing from the extant version of the *Histories*.²⁶

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²³ Diodoros 2.32.4 (Ktesias F 5).

²⁴ He dated the fall before 859 B.C.: Agathias 2.25.4 (*FGrHist* vol. IIIC, p. 441). The conqueror Ktesias called Arbakes.

²⁵ *Arm. Chron.* p. 28, 28ff Karst.

²⁶ I thank Professor W. M. Calder III and Mr W. G. Forrest for discussing a draft of this paper with me.