

The History of Herodotus

By Herodotus
Written 440 B.C.E
Translated by George Rawlinson

[...]

Book II, chapters 35-98 [on Egypt]

Of the Nile then let so much suffice as has been said. 35. Of Egypt however I shall make my report at length, because it has wonders more in number than any other land, and works too it has to show as much as any land, which are beyond expression great: for this reason then more shall be said concerning it.

The Egyptians in agreement with their climate, which is unlike any other, and with the river, which shows a nature different from all other rivers, established for themselves manners and customs in a way opposite to other men in almost all matters: for among them the women frequent the market and carry on trade, while the men remain at home and weave; and whereas others weave pushing the woof upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards: the men carry their burdens upon their heads and the women upon their shoulders: the women make water standing up and the men crouching down: they ease themselves in their houses and they eat without in the streets, alleging as reason for this that it is right to do secretly the things that are unseemly though necessary, but those which are not unseemly, in public: no woman is a minister either of male or female divinity, but men of all, both male and female: to support their parents the sons are in no way compelled, if they do not desire to do so, but the daughters are forced to do so, be they never so unwilling. 36. The priests of the gods in other lands wear long hair, but in Egypt they shave their heads: among other men the custom is that in mourning those whom the matter concerns most nearly have their hair cut short, but the Egyptians, when deaths occur, let their hair grow long, both that on the head and that on the chin, having before been close shaven: other

men have their daily living separated from beasts, but the Egyptians have theirs together with beasts: other men live on wheat and barley, but to any one of the Egyptians who makes his living on these it is a great reproach; they make their bread of maize, which some call spelt; they knead dough with their feet and clay with their hands, with which also they gather up dung: and whereas other men, except such as have learnt otherwise from the Egyptians, have their members as nature made them, the Egyptians practise circumcision: as to garments, the men wear two each and the women but one: and whereas others make fast the rings and ropes of the sails outside the ship, the Egyptians do this inside: finally in the writing of characters and reckoning with pebbles, while the Hellenes carry the hand from the left to the right, the Egyptians do this from the right to the left; and doing so they say that they do it themselves rightwise and the Hellenes leftwise: and they use two kinds of characters for writing, of which the one kind is called sacred and the other common.

37. They are religious excessively beyond all other men, and with regard to this they have customs as follows:--they drink from cups of bronze and rinse them out every day, and not some only do this but all: they wear garments of linen always newly washed, and this they make a special point of practice: they circumcise themselves for the sake of cleanliness, preferring to be clean rather than comely. The priests shave themselves all over their body every other day, so that no lice or any other foul thing may come to be upon them when they minister to the gods; and the priests wear garments of linen only and sandals of papyrus, and any other garment they may not take nor other sandals; these wash themselves in cold water twice in the day and twice again in the night; and other religious services they perform (one may almost say) of infinite number. They enjoy also good things not a few, for they do not consume or spend anything of their own substance, but there is sacred bread baked for them and they have each great quantity of flesh of oxen and geese coming in to them each day, and also wine of grapes is given to them; but it is not permitted to them to taste of fish: beans moreover the Egyptians do not at all sow in their land, and those which grow they neither eat raw nor boil for food; nay the priests do not endure even to look upon them, thinking this to be an unclean kind of pulse: and there is not one priest only for each of the gods but many, and of them one is chief-priest, and whenever a priest dies his son is appointed to his place.

38. The males of the ox kind they consider to belong to Epaphos, and on account of him they test them in the following manner:--If the priest sees one single black hair upon the beast he counts it not clean for sacrifice; and one of the priests who is appointed for the purpose makes investigation of these matters, both when the beast is standing upright and when it is lying on its back, drawing out its tongue moreover, to see if it is clean in respect of the appointed signs, which I shall tell of in another part of the history: he looks also at the hairs of the tail to see if it has them growing in the natural manner: and if it be clean in respect of all these things, he marks it with a piece of papyrus, rolling this round the horns, and then when he has plastered sealing-earth over it he sets upon it the seal of his signet-ring, and after that they take the animal away. But for one who sacrifices a beast not sealed the penalty appointed is death. 39. In this way then the beast is tested; and their appointed manner of sacrifice is as follows:--they lead the sealed beast to the altar where they happen to be sacrificing and then kindle a fire: after that, having poured libations of wine over the altar so that it runs down upon the victim and having called upon the god, they cut its throat, and having cut its throat they sever the head from the body. The body then of the beast they flay, but upon the head they make many imprecations first, and then they who have a market and Hellenes sojourning among them for trade, these carry it to the market-place and sell it, while they who have no Hellenes among them cast it away into the river: and this is the form of imprecation which they utter upon the heads, praying that if any evil be about to befall either themselves who are offering sacrifice or the land of Egypt in general, it may come rather upon this head. Now as regards the heads of the beasts which are sacrificed and the pouring over them of the wine, all the Egyptians have the same customs equally for all their sacrifices; and by reason of this custom none of the Egyptians eat of the head either of this or of any other kind of animal: 40, but the manner of disembowelling the victims and of burning them is appointed among them differently for different sacrifices; I shall speak however of the sacrifices to that goddess whom they regard as the greatest of all, and to whom they celebrate the greatest feast.--When they have flayed the bullock and made imprecation, they take out the whole of its lower entrails but leave in the body the upper entrails and the fat; and they sever from it the legs and the end of the loin and the shoulders

and the neck: and this done, they fill the rest of the body of the animal with consecrated loaves and honey and raisins and figs and frankincense and myrrh and every other kind of spices, and having filled it with these they offer it, pouring over it great abundance of oil. They make their sacrifice after fasting, and while the offerings are being burnt, they all beat themselves for mourning, and when they have finished beating themselves they set forth as a feast that which they left unburnt of the sacrifice. 41. The clean males then of the ox kind, both full-grown animals and calves, are sacrificed by all the Egyptians; the females however they may not sacrifice, but these are sacred to Isis; for the figure of Isis is in the form of a woman with cow's horns, just as the Hellenes present Io in pictures, and all the Egyptians without distinction reverence cows far more than any other kind of cattle; for which reason neither man nor woman of Egyptian race would kiss a man who is a Hellene on the mouth, nor will they use a knife or roasting-spits or a caldron belonging to a Hellene, nor taste of the flesh even of a clean animal if it has been cut with the knife of a Hellene. And the cattle of this kind which die they bury in the following manner:--the females they cast into the river, but the males they bury, each people in the suburb of their town, with one of the horns, or sometimes both, protruding to mark the place; and when the bodies have rotted away and the appointed time comes on, then to each city comes a boat from that which is called the island of Prosopitis (this is in the Delta, and the extent of its circuit is nine /schoines/). In this island of Prosopitis is situated, besides many other cities, that one from which the boats come to take up the bones of the oxen, and the name of the city is Atarbechis, and in it there is set up a holy temple of Aphrodite. From this city many go abroad in various directions, some to one city and others to another, and when they have dug up the bones of the oxen they carry them off, and coming together they bury them in one single place. In the same manner as they bury the oxen they bury also their other cattle when they die; for about them also they have the same law laid down, and these also they abstain from killing.

42. Now all who have a temple set up to the Theban Zeus¹ or who are of the district of Thebes, these, I say, all sacrifice goats and abstain from sheep: for not all the Egyptians equally reverence the same gods,

¹ Zeus = the chief god of the Greeks, associated with the sky.

except only Isis and Osiris (who they say is Dionysos²), these they all reverence alike: but they who have a temple of Mendes or belong to the Mendesian district, these abstain from goats and sacrifice sheep. Now the men of Thebes and those who after their example abstain from sheep, say that this custom was established among them for the cause which follows:--Heracles³ (they say) had an earnest desire to see Zeus, and Zeus did not desire to be seen of him; and at last when Heracles was urgent in entreaty Zeus contrived this device, that is to say, he flayed a ram and held in front of him the head of the ram which he had cut off, and he put on over him the fleece and then showed himself to him. Hence the Egyptians make the image of Zeus into the face of a ram; and the Ammonians do so also after their example, being settlers both from the Egyptians and from the Ethiopians, and using a language which is a medley of both tongues: and in my opinion it is from this god that the Ammonians took the name which they have, for the Egyptians call Zeus /Amun/. The Thebans then do not sacrifice rams but hold them sacred for this reason; on one day however in the year, on the feast of Zeus, they cut up in the same manner and flay one single ram and cover with its skin the image of Zeus, and then they bring up to it another image of Heracles. This done, all who are in the temple beat themselves in lamentation for the ram, and then they bury it in a sacred tomb.

43. About Heracles I heard the account given that he was of the number of the twelve gods; but of the other Heracles whom the Hellenes know I was not able to hear in any part of Egypt: and moreover to prove that the Egyptians did not take the name of Heracles from the Hellenes, but rather the Hellenes from the Egyptians,--that is to say those of the Hellenes who gave the name Heracles to the son of Amphitryon,--of that, I say, besides many other evidences there is chiefly this, namely that the parents of this Heracles, Amphitryon and Alcmene, were both of Egypt by descent, and also that the Egyptians say that they do not know the names either of Poseidon⁴ or of the Dioscuroi⁵, nor have these been accepted by them as gods among the other gods; whereas if they had received from the Hellenes the name of any divinity, they

² Dionysos = the Greek god of wine, vegetation, the theatre, and madness.

³ Heracles = a Greek hero and son of Zeus, considered by the Greeks a "demigod" or half-god.

⁴ Poseidon = the Greek god of the Sea, one of the major Greek gods.

⁵ The Dioscuroi = Castor and Pollux, twin Greek heroes, notable for the fact that one was born mortal and the other immortal.

would naturally have preserved the memory of these most of all, assuming that in those times as now some of the Hellenes were wont to make voyages[46a] and were sea-faring folk, as I suppose and as my judgment compels me to think; so that the Egyptians would have learnt the names of these gods even more than that of Heracles. In fact however Heracles is a very ancient Egyptian god; and (as they say themselves) it is seventeen thousand years to the beginning of the reign of Amasis from the time when the twelve gods, of whom they count that Heracles is one, were begotten of the eight gods. 44. I moreover, desiring to know something certain of these matters so far as might be, made a voyage also to Tyre of Phenicia, hearing that in that place there was a holy temple of Heracles; and I saw that it was richly furnished with many votive offerings besides, and especially there were in it two pillars, the one of pure gold and the other of an emerald stone of such size as to shine by night: and having come to speech with the priests of the god, I asked them how long time it was since their temple had been set up: and these also I found to be at variance with the Hellenes, for they said that at the same time when Tyre was founded, the temple of the god also had been set up, and that it was a period of two thousand three hundred years since their people began to dwell at Tyre. I saw also at Tyre another temple of Heracles, with the surname Thasian; and I came to Thasos also and there I found a temple of Heracles set up by the Phoenicians, who had sailed out to seek for Europa and had colonised Thasos; and these things happened full five generations of men before Heracles the son of Amphitryon was born in Hellas. So then my inquiries show clearly that Heracles is an ancient god, and those of the Hellenes seem to me to act most rightly who have two temples of Heracles set up, and who sacrifice to the one as an immortal god and with the title Olympian, and make offerings of the dead to the other as a hero. 45.

Moreover, besides many other stories which the Hellenes tell without due consideration, this tale is especially foolish which they tell about Heracles, namely that when he came to Egypt, the Egyptians put on him wreaths and led him forth in procession to sacrifice him to Zeus; and he for some time kept quiet, but when they were beginning the sacrifice of him at the altar, he betook himself to prowess and slew them all. I for my part am of opinion that the Hellenes when they tell this tale are altogether without knowledge of the nature and customs of the Egyptians; for how should they for whom it is not lawful to sacrifice even beasts, except swine and the males of

oxen and calves (such of them as are clean) and geese, how should these sacrifice human beings? Besides this, how is it in nature possible that Heracles, being one person only and moreover a man (as they assert), should slay many myriads? Having said so much of these matters, we pray that we may have grace from both the gods and the heroes for our speech.

46. Now the reason why those of the Egyptians whom I have mentioned do not sacrifice goats, female or male, is this:--the Mendesians count Pan to be one of the eight gods (now these eight gods they say came into being before the twelve gods), and the painters and image-makers represent in painting and in sculpture the figure of Pan, just as the Hellenes do, with goat's face and legs, not supposing him to be really like this but to resemble the other gods; the cause however why they represent him in this form I prefer not to say. The Mendesians then reverence all goats and the males more than the females (and the goatherds too have greater honour than other herdsmen), but of the goats one especially is revered, and when he dies there is great mourning in all the Mendesian district: and both the goat and Pan are called in the Egyptian tongue /Mendes/. Moreover in my lifetime there happened in that district this marvel, that is to say a he-goat had intercourse with a woman publicly, and this was so done that all men might have evidence of it.

47. The pig is accounted by the Egyptians an abominable animal; and first, if any of them in passing by touch a pig, he goes into the river and dips himself forthwith in the water together with his garments; and then too swineherds, though they be native Egyptians, unlike all others do not enter any of the temples in Egypt, nor is anyone willing to give his daughter in marriage to one of them or to take a wife from among them; but the swineherds both give in marriage to one another and take from one another. Now to the other gods the Egyptians do not think it right to sacrifice swine; but to the Moon and to Dionysos alone at the same time and on the same full-moon they sacrifice swine, and then eat their flesh: and as to the reason why, when they abominate swine at all their other feasts, they sacrifice them at this, there is a story told by the Egyptians; and this story I know, but it is not a seemly one for me to tell. Now the sacrifice of the swine to the Moon is performed as follows:--when the priest has slain the victim, he puts together the end of the tail and the spleen

and the caul, and covers them up with the whole of the fat of the animal which is about the paunch, and then he offers them with fire; and the rest of the flesh they eat on that day of full moon upon which they have held the sacrifice, but on any day after this they will not taste of it: the poor however among them by reason of the scantiness of their means shape pigs of dough and having baked them they offer these as a sacrifice. 48. Then for Dionysos on the eve of the festival each one kills a pig by cutting its throat before his own doors, and after that he gives the pig to the swineherd who sold it to him, to carry away again; and the rest of the feast of Dionysos is celebrated by the Egyptians in the same way as by the Hellenes in almost all things except choral dances, but instead of the /phallos/ they have invented another contrivance, namely figures of about a cubit in height worked by strings, which women carry about the villages, with the privy member made to move and not much less in size than the rest of the body: and a flute goes before and they follow singing the praises of Dionysos. As to the reason why the figure has this member larger than is natural and moves it, though it moves no other part of the body, about this there is a sacred story told. 49. Now I think that Melampus the son of Amytheon was not without knowledge of these rites of sacrifice, but was acquainted with them: for Melampus is he who first set forth to the Hellenes the name of Dionysos and the manner of sacrifice and the procession of the /phallos/. Strictly speaking indeed, he when he made it known did not take in the whole, but those wise men who came after him made it known more at large. Melampus then is he who taught of the /phallos/ which is carried in procession for Dionysos, and from him the Hellenes learnt to do that which they do. I say then that Melampus being a man of ability contrived for himself an art of divination, and having learnt from Egypt he taught the Hellenes many things, and among them those that concern Dionysos, making changes in some few points of them: for I shall not say that that which is done in worship of the god in Egypt came accidentally to be the same with that which is done among the Hellenes, for then these rites would have been in character with the Hellenic worship and not lately brought in; nor certainly shall I say that the Egyptians took from the Hellenes either this or any other customary observance: but I think it most probable that Melampus learnt the matters concerning Dionysos from Cadmos the Tyrian and from those who came with him from Phenicia to the land which we now call Bœotia.

50. Moreover the naming of almost all the gods has come to Hellas from Egypt: for that it has come from the Barbarians I find by inquiry is true, and I am of opinion that most probably it has come from Egypt, because, except in the case of Poseidon and the Dioscuroi (in accordance with that which I have said before), and also of Hera⁶ and Hestia and Themis and the Charites and Nereïds, the Egyptians have had the names of all the other gods in their country for all time. What I say here is that which the Egyptians think themselves: but as for the gods whose names they profess that they do not know, these I think received their naming from the Pelasgians, except Poseidon; but about this god the Hellenes learnt from the Libyans, for no people except the Libyans have had the name of Poseidon from the first and have paid honour to this god always. Nor, it may be added, have the Egyptians any custom of worshipping heroes. 51. These observances then, and others besides these which I shall mention, the Hellenes have adopted from the Egyptians; but to make, as they do, the images of Hermes with the /phallos/ they have learnt not from the Egyptians but from the Pelasgians, the custom having been received by the Athenians first of all the Hellenes and from these by the rest; for just at the time when the Athenians were beginning to rank among the Hellenes, the Pelasgians became dwellers with them in their land, and from this very cause it was that they began to be counted as Hellenes. Whosoever has been initiated in the mysteries of the Cabeiroi, which the Samothrakians perform having received them from the Pelasgians, that man knows the meaning of my speech; for these very Pelasgians who became dwellers with the Athenians used to dwell before that time in Samothrake, and from them the Samothrakians received their mysteries. So then the Athenians were the first of the Hellenes who made the images of Hermes with the /phallos/, having learnt from the Pelasgians; and the Pelasgians told a sacred story about it, which is set forth in the mysteries in Samothrake. 52. Now the Pelasgians formerly were wont to make all their sacrifices calling upon the gods in prayer, as I know from that which I heard at Dodona, but they gave no title or name to any of them, for they had not yet heard any, but they called them gods ({{theous}}) from some such notion as this, that they had set ({{thentes}}) in order all things and so had the distribution of everything. Afterwards, when much time had elapsed,

⁶ Hera = the wife of Zeus, patron goddess of mothers

they learnt from Egypt the names of the gods, all except Dionysos, for his name they learnt long afterwards; and after a time the Pelasgians consulted the Oracle at Dodona about the names, for this prophetic seat is accounted to be the most ancient of the Oracles which are among the Hellenes, and at that time it was the only one. So when the Pelasgians asked the Oracle at Dodona whether they should adopt the names which had come from the Barbarians, the Oracle in reply bade them make use of the names. From this time they sacrificed using the names of the gods, and from the Pelasgians the Hellenes afterwards received them: 53, but whence the several gods had their birth, or whether they all were from the beginning, and of what form they are, they did not learn till yesterday, as it were, or the day before: for Hesiod and Homer I suppose were four hundred years before my time and not more, and these are they who made a theogony for the Hellenes and gave the titles to the gods and distributed to them honours and arts, and set forth their forms: but the poets who are said to have been before these men were really in my opinion after them. Of these things the first are said by the priestesses of Dodona, and the latter things, those namely which have regard to Hesiod and Homer, by myself.

54. As regards the Oracles both that among the Hellenes and that in Libya, the Egyptians tell the following tale. The priests of the Theban Zeus told me that two women in the service of the temple had been carried away from Thebes by Phoenicians⁷, and that they had heard that one of them had been sold to go into Libya and the other to the Hellenes; and these women, they said, were they who first founded the prophetic seats among the nations which have been named: and when I inquired whence they knew so perfectly of this tale which they told, they said in reply that a great search had been made by the priests after these women, and that they had not been able to find them, but they had heard afterwards this tale about them which they were telling. 55. This I heard from the priests at Thebes, and what follows is said by the prophetesses of Dodona. They say that two black doves flew from Thebes to Egypt, and came one of them to Libya and the other to their land. And this latter settled upon an oak-tree and spoke with human voice, saying that it was necessary that a prophetic seat of Zeus should be established in that place; and they supposed

⁷ An advanced race of seafaring people of Semitic descent who (like the Greeks) were establishing colonies throughout the Mediterranean in the 5th century BC.

that that was of the gods which was announced to them, and made one accordingly: and the dove which went away to the Libyans, they say, bade the Libyans to make an Oracle of Ammon; and this also is of Zeus. The priestesses of Dodona told me these things, of whom the eldest was named Promeneia, the next after her Timarete, and the youngest Nicandra; and the other people of Dodona who were engaged about the temple gave accounts agreeing with theirs. 56. I however have an opinion about the matter as follows:--If the Phoenicians did in truth carry away the consecrated women and sold one of them into Libya and the other into Hellas, I suppose that in the country now called Hellas, which was formerly called Pelasgia, this woman was sold into the land of the Thesprotians; and then being a slave there she set up a sanctuary of Zeus under a real oak-tree; as indeed it was natural that being an attendant of the sanctuary of Zeus at Thebes, she should there, in the place to which she had come, have a memory of him; and after this, when she got understanding of the Hellenic tongue, she established an Oracle, and she reported, I suppose, that her sister had been sold in Libya by the same Phoenicians by whom she herself had been sold. 57. Moreover, I think that the women were called doves by the people of Dodona for the reason that they were Barbarians and because it seemed to them that they uttered voice like birds; but after a time (they say) the dove spoke with human voice, that is when the woman began to speak so that they could understand; but so long as she spoke a Barbarian tongue she seemed to them to be uttering voice like a bird: for had it been really a dove, how could it speak with human voice? And in saying that the dove was black, they indicate that the woman was Egyptian. The ways of delivering oracles too at Thebes in Egypt and at Dodona closely resemble one another, as it happens, and also the method of divination by victims has come from Egypt.

58. Moreover, it is true also that the Egyptians were the first of men who made solemn assemblies and processions and approaches to the temples, and from them the Hellenes have learnt them, and my evidence for this is that the Egyptian celebrations of these have been held from a very ancient time, whereas the Hellenic were introduced but lately. 59. The Egyptians hold their solemn assemblies not once in the year but often, especially and with the

greatest zeal and devotion at the city of Bubastis for Artemis⁸, and next at Busiris for Isis; for in this last-named city there is a very great temple of Isis, and this city stands in the middle of the Delta of Egypt; now Isis is in the tongue of the Hellenes Demeter: thirdly, they have a solemn assembly at the city of Saïs for Athene, fourthly at Heliopolis for the Sun (Helios), fifthly at the city of Buto in honour of Leto, and sixthly at the city of Papremis for Ares. 60. Now, when they are coming to the city of Bubastis they do as follows:--they sail men and women together, and a great multitude of each sex in every boat; and some of the women have rattles and rattle with them, while some of the men play the flute during the whole time of the voyage, and the rest, both women and men, sing and clap their hands; and when as they sail they come opposite to any city on the way they bring the boat to land, and some of the women continue to do as I have said, others cry aloud and jeer at the women in that city, some dance, and some stand up and pull up their garments. This they do by every city along the river-bank; and when they come to Bubastis they hold festival celebrating great sacrifices, and more wine of grapes is consumed upon that festival than during the whole of the rest of the year. To this place (so say the natives) they come together year by year even to the number of seventy myriads[59a] of men and women, besides children. 61. Thus it is done here; and how they celebrate the festival in honour of Isis at the city of Busiris has been told by me before: for, as I said, they beat themselves in mourning after the sacrifice, all of them both men and women, very many myriads of people; but for whom they beat themselves it is not permitted to me by religion to say: and so many as there are of the Carians dwelling in Egypt do this even more than the Egyptians themselves, inasmuch as they cut their foreheads also with knives; and by this it is manifested that they are strangers and not Egyptians. 62. At the times when they gather together at the city of Saïs for their sacrifices, on a certain night they all kindle lamps many in number in the open air round about the houses; now the lamps are saucers full of salt and oil mixed, and the wick floats by itself on the surface, and this burns during the whole night; and to the festival is given the name /Lychnociaia/ (the lighting of the lamps). Moreover those of the Egyptians who have not come to this solemn assembly observe the night of the festival and themselves also light lamps all of them, and thus

⁸ Artemis = the Greek goddess of the hunt

not in Saïs alone are they lighted, but over all Egypt: and as to the reason why light and honour are allotted to this night, about this there is a sacred story told. 63. To Heliopolis and Buto they go year by year and do sacrifice only: but at Papremis they do sacrifice and worship as elsewhere, and besides that, when the sun begins to go down, while some few of the priests are occupied with the image of the god, the greater number of them stand in the entrance of the temple with wooden clubs, and other persons to the number of more than a thousand men with purpose to perform a vow, these also having all of them staves of wood, stand in a body opposite to those: and the image, which is in a small shrine of wood covered over with gold, they take out on the day before to another sacred building. The few then who have been left about the image, draw a wain [wagon] with four wheels, which bears the shrine and the image that is within the shrine, and the other priests standing in the gateway try to prevent it from entering, and the men who are under a vow come to the assistance of the god and strike them, while the others defend themselves. Then there comes to be a hard fight with staves, and they break one another's heads, and I am of opinion that many even die of the wounds they receive; the Egyptians however told me that no one died. This solemn assembly the people of the place say that they established for the following reason:--the mother of Ares, they say, used to dwell in this temple, and Ares, having been brought up away from her, when he grew up came thither desiring to visit his mother, and the attendants of his mother's temple, not having seen him before, did not permit him to pass in, but kept him away; and he brought men to help him from another city and handled roughly the attendants of the temple, and entered to visit his mother. Hence, they say, this exchange of blows has become the custom in honour of Ares⁹ upon his festival.

64. The Egyptians were the first who made it a point of religion not to lie with women in temples, nor to enter into temples after going away from women without first bathing: for almost all other men except the Egyptians and the Hellenes lie with women in temples and enter into a temple after going away from women without bathing, since they hold that there is no difference in this respect between men and beasts: for they say that they see beasts and the various kinds of birds coupling together both in the temples and in the sacred

⁹ Ares = the Greek god of war

enclosures of the gods; if then this were not pleasing to the god, the beasts would not do so.

65. Thus do these defend that which they do, which by me is disallowed: but the Egyptians are excessively careful in their observances, both in other matters which concern the sacred rites and also in those which follow:--Egypt, though it borders upon Libya, does not very much abound in wild animals, but such as they have are one and all accounted by them sacred, some of them living with men and others not. But if I should say for what reasons the sacred animals have been thus dedicated, I should fall into discourse of matters pertaining to the gods, of which I most desire not to speak; and what I have actually said touching slightly upon them, I said because I was constrained by necessity. About these animals there is a custom of this kind:--persons have been appointed of the Egyptians, both men and women, to provide the food for each kind of beast separately, and their office goes down from father to son; and those who dwell in the various cities perform vows to them thus, that is, when they make a vow to the god to whom the animal belongs, they shave the head of their children either the whole or the half or the third part of it, and then set the hair in the balance against silver, and whatever it weighs, this the man gives to the person who provides for the animals, and she cuts up fish of equal value and gives it for food to the animals. Thus food for their support has been appointed: and if any one kill any of these animals, the penalty, if he do it with his own will, is death, and if against his will, such penalty as the priests may appoint: but whosoever shall kill an ibis or a hawk, whether it be with his will or against his will, must die. 66. Of the animals that live with men there are great numbers, and would be many more but for the accidents which befall the cats. For when the females have produced young they are no longer in the habit of going to the males, and these seeking to be united with them are not able. To this end then they contrive as follows,--they either take away by force or remove secretly the young from the females and kill them (but after killing they do not eat them), and the females being deprived of their young and desiring more, therefore come to the males, for it is a creature that is fond of its young. Moreover when a fire occurs, the cats seem to be divinely possessed; for while the Egyptians stand at intervals and look after the cats, not taking any care to extinguish the fire, the cats slipping through or leaping over the

men, jump into the fire; and when this happens, great mourning comes upon the Egyptians. And in whatever houses a cat has died by a natural death, all those who dwell in this house shave their eyebrows only, but those in whose houses a dog has died shave their whole body and also their head. 67. The cats when they are dead are carried away to sacred buildings in the city of Bubastis, where after being embalmed they are buried; but the dogs they bury each people in their own city in sacred tombs; and the ichneumons are buried just in the same way as the dogs. The shrew-mice however and the hawks they carry away to the city of Buto, and the ibises to Hermopolis; the bears (which are not commonly seen) and the wolves, not much larger in size than foxes, they bury on the spot where they are found lying.

68. Of the crocodile the nature is as follows:--during the four most wintry months this creature eats nothing: she has four feet and is an animal belonging to the land and the water both; for she produces and hatches eggs on the land, and the most part of the day she remains upon dry land, but the whole of the night in the river, for the water in truth is warmer than the unclouded open air and the dew. Of all the mortal creatures of which we have knowledge this grows to the greatest bulk from the smallest beginning; for the eggs which she produces are not much larger than those of geese and the newly-hatched young one is in proportion to the egg, but as he grows he becomes as much as seventeen cubits long and sometimes yet larger. He has eyes like those of a pig and teeth large and tusky, in proportion to the size of his body; but unlike all other beasts he grows no tongue, neither does he move his lower jaw, but brings the upper jaw towards the lower, being in this too unlike all other beasts. He has moreover strong claws and a scaly hide upon his back which cannot be pierced; and he is blind in the water, but in the air he is of very keen sight. Since he has his living in the water he keeps his mouth all full within of leeches; and whereas all other birds and beasts fly from him, the trochilus is a creature which is at peace with him, seeing that from her he receives benefit; for the crocodile having come out of the water to the land and then having opened his mouth (this he is wont to do generally towards the West Wind), the trochilus upon that enters into his mouth and swallows down the leeches, and he being benefited is pleased and does no harm to the trochilus. 69. Now for some of the Egyptians the crocodiles are sacred animals, and for others not so, but they treat them on the contrary as enemies: those however who dwell about Thebes

and about the lake of Moiris hold them to be most sacred, and each of these two peoples keeps one crocodile selected from the whole number, which has been trained to tameness, and they put hanging ornaments of molten stone and of gold into the ears of these and anklets round the front feet, and they give them food appointed and victims of sacrifices and treat them as well as possible while they live, and after they are dead they bury them in sacred tombs, embalming them: but those who dwell about the city of Elephantine even eat them, not holding them to be sacred. They are called not crocodiles but /champsai/, and the Ionians gave them the name of crocodile, comparing their form to that of the crocodiles (lizards) which appear in their country in the stone walls. 70. There are many ways in use of catching them and of various kinds: I shall describe that which to me seems the most worthy of being told. A man puts the back of a pig upon a hook as bait, and lets it go into the middle of the river, while he himself upon the bank of the river has a young live pig, which he beats; and the crocodile hearing its cries makes for the direction of the sound, and when he finds the pig's back he swallows it down: then they pull, and when he is drawn out to land, first of all the hunter forthwith plasters up his eyes with mud, and having so done he very easily gets the mastery of him, but if he does not do so he has much trouble.

71. The river-horse is sacred in the district of Papremis, but for the other Egyptians he is not sacred; and this is the appearance which he presents: he is four-footed, cloven-hoofed like an ox, flat-nosed, with a mane like a horse and showing teeth like tusks, with a tail and voice like a horse, and in size as large as the largest ox; and his hide is so exceedingly thick that when it has been dried shafts of javelins are made of it. 72. There are moreover otters in the river, which they consider to be sacred; and of fish also they esteem that which is called the /lepidotos/ to be sacred, and also the eel; and these they say are sacred to the Nile: and of birds the fox-goose.

73. There is also another sacred bird called the phoenix which I did not myself see except in painting, for in truth he comes to them very rarely, at intervals, as the people of Heliopolis say, of five hundred years; and these say that he comes regularly when his father dies; and if he be like the painting, he is of this size and nature, that is to say, some of his feathers are of gold colour and others red, and in outline and size he is as nearly as possible like an eagle. This bird

they say (but I cannot believe the story) contrives as follows:-- setting forth from Arabia he conveys his father, they say, to the temple of the Sun (Helios) plastered up in myrrh, and buries him in the temple of the Sun; and he conveys him thus:--he forms first an egg of myrrh as large as he is able to carry, and then he makes trial of carrying it, and when he has made trial sufficiently, then he hollows out the egg and places his father within it and plasters over with other myrrh that part of the egg where he hollowed it out to put his father in, and when his father is laid in it, it proves (they say) to be of the same weight as it was; and after he has plastered it up, he conveys the whole to Egypt to the temple of the Sun. Thus they say that this bird does.

74. There are also about Thebes sacred serpents, not at all harmful to men, which are small in size and have two horns growing from the top of the head: these they bury when they die in the temple of Zeus, for to this god they say that they are sacred. 75. There is a region moreover in Arabia, situated nearly over against the city of Buto, to which place I came to inquire about the winged serpents: and when I came thither I saw bones of serpents and spines in quantity so great that it is impossible to make report of the number, and there were heaps of spines, some heaps large and others less large and others smaller still than these, and these heaps were many in number. This region in which the spines are scattered upon the ground is of the nature of an entrance from a narrow mountain pass to a great plain, which plain adjoins the plain of Egypt; and the story goes that at the beginning of spring winged serpents from Arabia fly towards Egypt, and the birds called ibises meet them at the entrance to this country and do not suffer the serpents to go by but kill them. On account of this deed it is (say the Arabians) that the ibis has come to be greatly honoured by the Egyptians, and the Egyptians also agree that it is for this reason that they honour these birds. 76. The outward form of the ibis is this:--it is a deep black all over, and has legs like those of a crane and a very curved beak, and in size it is about equal to a rail: this is the appearance of the black kind which fight with the serpents, but of those which most crowd round men's feet (for there are two several kinds of ibises) the head is bare and also the whole of the throat, and it is white in feathering except the head and neck and the extremities of the wings and the rump (in all these parts of which I have spoken it is a deep black), while in legs and in the form

of the head it resembles the other. As for the serpent its form is like that of the watersnake; and it has wings not feathered but most nearly resembling the wings of the bat. Let so much suffice as has been said now concerning sacred animals.

77. Of the Egyptians themselves, those who dwell in the part of Egypt which is sown for crops practise memory more than any other men and are the most learned in history by far of all those of whom I have had experience: and their manner of life is as follows:--For three successive days in each month they purge, hunting after health with emetics and clysters, and they think that all the diseases which exist are produced in men by the food on which they live; for the Egyptians are from other causes also the most healthy of all men next after the Libyans (in my opinion on account of the seasons, because the seasons do not change, for by the changes of things generally, and especially of the seasons, diseases are most apt to be produced in men), and as to their diet, it is as follows:--they eat bread, making loaves of maize, which they call /kyllestis/, and they use habitually a wine made out of barley, for vines they have not in their land. Of their fish some they dry in the sun and then eat them without cooking, others they eat cured in brine. Of birds they eat quails and ducks and small birds without cooking, after first curing them; and everything else which they have belonging to the class of birds or fishes, except such as have been set apart by them as sacred, they eat roasted or boiled. 78. In the entertainments of the rich among them, when they have finished eating, a man bears round a wooden figure of a dead body in a coffin, made as like the reality as may be both by painting and carving, and measuring about a cubit or two cubits each way; and this he shows to each of those who are drinking together, saying: "When thou lookest upon this, drink and be merry, for thou shalt be such as this when thou art dead." Thus they do at their carousals. 79. The customs which they practise are derived from their fathers and they do not acquire others in addition; but besides other customary things among them which are worthy of mention, they have one song, that of Linos, the same who is sung of both in Phenicia and in Cyprus and elsewhere, having however a name different according to the various nations. This song agrees exactly with that which the Hellenes sing calling on the name of Linos, so that besides many

other things about which I wonder among those matters which concern Egypt, I wonder especially about this, namely whence they got the song of Linos. It is evident however that they have sung this song from immemorial time, and in the Egyptian tongue Linos is called Maneros. The Egyptians told me that he was the only son of him who first became king of Egypt, and that he died before his time and was honoured with these lamentations by the Egyptians, and that this was their first and only song. 80. In another respect the Egyptians are in agreement with some of the Hellenes, namely with the Lacedemonians, but not with the rest, that is to say, the younger of them when they meet the elder give way and move out of the path, and when their elders approach they rise out of their seat. In this which follows however they are not in agreement with any of the Hellenes,--instead of addressing one another in the roads they do reverence, lowering their hand down to their knee. 81. They wear tunics of linen about their legs with fringes, which they call /calasiris/; above these they have garments of white wool thrown over: woollen garments however are not taken into the temples, nor are they buried with them, for this is not permitted by religion. In these points they are in agreement with the observances called Orphic and Bacchic (which are really Egyptian), and also with those of the Pythagoreans, for one who takes part in these mysteries is also forbidden by religious rule to be buried in woollen garments; and about this there is a sacred story told.

82. Besides these things the Egyptians have found out also to what god each month and each day belongs, and what fortunes a man will meet with who is born on any particular day, and how he will die, and what kind of a man he will be: and these inventions were taken up by those of the Hellenes who occupied themselves about poesy. Portents too have been found out by them more than by all other men besides; for when a portent has happened, they observe and write down the event which comes of it, and if ever afterwards anything resembling this happens, they believe that the event which comes of it will be similar. 83. Their divination is ordered thus:--the art is assigned not to any man, but to certain of the gods, for there are in their land Oracles of Heracles, of Apollo, of Athene, of Artemis, of Ares, and of Zeus, and moreover that which they hold most in honour of all, namely the Oracle of Leto which is in the city of Buto. The manner of divination however is not yet established among them according to the same fashion everywhere, but is different in different places. 84. The art of

medicine among them is distributed thus:--each physician is a physician of one disease and of no more; and the whole country is full of physicians, for some profess themselves to be physicians of the eyes, others of the head, others of the teeth, others of the affections of the stomach, and others of the more obscure ailments.

85. Their fashions of mourning and of burial are these:--Whenever any household has lost a man who is of any regard amongst them, the whole number of women of that house forthwith plaster over their heads or even their faces with mud. Then leaving the corpse within the house they go themselves to and fro about the city and beat themselves, with their garments bound up by a girdle and their breasts exposed, and with them go all the women who are related to the dead man, and on the other side the men beat themselves, they too having their garments bound up by a girdle; and when they have done this, they then convey the body to the embalming. 86. In this occupation certain persons employ themselves regularly and inherit this as a craft. These, whenever a corpse is conveyed to them, show to those who brought it wooden models of corpses made like reality by painting, and the best of the ways of embalming they say is that of him whose name I think it impiety to mention when speaking of a matter of such a kind; the second which they show is less good than this and also less expensive; and the third is the least expensive of all. Having told them about this, they inquire of them in which way they desire the corpse of their friend to be prepared. Then they after they have agreed for a certain price depart out of the way, and the others being left behind in the buildings embalm according to the best of these ways thus:--First with a crooked iron tool they draw out the brain through the nostrils, extracting it partly thus and partly by pouring in drugs; and after this with a sharp stone of Ethiopia they make a cut along the side and take out the whole contents of the belly, and when they have cleared out the cavity and cleansed it with palm-wine they cleanse it again with spices pounded up: then they fill the belly with pure myrrh pounded up and with cassia and other spices except frankincense, and sew it together again. Having so done they keep it for embalming covered up in natron for seventy days, but for a longer time than this it is not permitted to embalm it; and when the seventy days are past, they wash the corpse and roll its whole body up in fine linen cut into bands, smearing these beneath with gum, which the Egyptians use generally instead of glue. Then the kinsfolk receive

it from them and have a wooden figure made in the shape of a man, and when they have had this made they enclose the corpse, and having shut it up within, they store it then in a sepulchral chamber, setting it to stand upright against the wall. 87. Thus they deal with the corpses which are prepared in the most costly way; but for those who desire the middle way and wish to avoid great cost they prepare the corpse as follows:--having filled their syringes with the oil which is got from cedar-wood, with this they forthwith fill the belly of the corpse, and this they do without having either cut it open or taken out the bowels, but they inject the oil by the breech, and having stopped the drench from returning back they keep it then the appointed number of days for embalming, and on the last of the days they let the cedar oil come out from the belly, which they before put in; and it has such power that it brings out with it the bowels and interior organs of the body dissolved; and the natron dissolves the flesh, so that there is left of the corpse only the skin and the bones. When they have done this they give back the corpse at once in that condition without working upon it any more. 88. The third kind of embalming, by which are prepared the bodies of those who have less means, is as follows:-- they cleanse out the belly with a purge and then keep the body for embalming during the seventy days, and at once after that they give it back to the bringers to carry away. 89. The wives of men of rank when they die are not given at once to be embalmed, nor such women as are very beautiful or of greater regard than others, but on the third or fourth day after their death (and not before) they are delivered to the embalmers. They do so about this matter in order that the embalmers may not abuse their women, for they say that one of them was taken once doing so to the corpse of a woman lately dead, and his fellow-craftsman gave information. 90. Whenever any one, either of the Egyptians themselves or of strangers, is found to have been carried off by a crocodile or brought to his death by the river itself, the people of any city by which he may have been cast up on land must embalm him and lay him out in the fairest way they can and bury him in a sacred burial-place, nor may any of his relations or friends besides touch him, but the priests of the Nile themselves handle the corpse and bury it as that of one who was something more than man.

91. Hellenic usages they will by no means follow, and to speak generally they follow those of no other men whatever. This rule is observed by most of the Egyptians; but there is a large city named

Chemmis in the Theban district near Neapolis, and in this city there is a temple of Perseus¹⁰ the son of Danae which is of a square shape, and round it grow date-palms: the gateway of the temple is built of stone and of very great size, and at the entrance of it stand two great statues of stone. Within this enclosure is a temple-house and in it stands an image of Perseus. These people of Chemmis say that Perseus is wont often to appear in their land and often within the temple, and that a sandal which has been worn by him is found sometimes, being in length two cubits, and whenever this appears all Egypt prospers. This they say, and they do in honour of Perseus after Hellenic fashion thus,--they hold an athletic contest, which includes the whole list of games, and they offer in prizes cattle and cloaks and skins: and when I inquired why to them alone Perseus was wont to appear, and wherefore they were separated from all the other Egyptians in that they held an athletic contest, they said that Perseus had been born of their city, for Danaos and Lynkeus were men of Chemmis and had sailed to Hellas, and from them they traced a descent and came down to Perseus: and they told me that he had come to Egypt for the reason which the Hellenes also say, namely to bring from Libya the Gorgon's head, and had then visited them also and recognised all his kinsfolk, and they said that he had well learnt the name of Chemmis before he came to Egypt, since he had heard it from his mother, and that they celebrated an athletic contest for him by his own command.

92. All these are customs practised by the Egyptians who dwell above the fens: and those who are settled in the fen-land have the same customs for the most part as the other Egyptians, both in other matters and also in that they live each with one wife only, as do the Hellenes; but for economy in respect of food they have invented these things besides:--when the river has become full and the plains have been flooded, there grow in the water great numbers of lilies, which the Egyptians call /lotos/; these they cut with a sickle and dry in the sun, and then they pound that which grows in the middle of the lotos and which is like the head of a poppy, and they make of it loaves baked with fire. The root also of this lotos is edible and has a rather sweet taste: it is round in shape and about the size of an apple. There are other lilies too, in flower resembling roses, which also grow in the river, and from them the fruit is produced in a

¹⁰ Perseus = a Greek hero, the slayer of the monster Medusa

separate vessel springing from the root by the side of the plant itself, and very nearly resembles a wasp's comb: in this there grow edible seeds in great numbers of the size of an olive-stone, and they are eaten either fresh or dried. Besides this they pull up from the fens the papyrus which grows every year, and the upper parts of it they cut off and turn to other uses, but that which is left below for about a cubit in length they eat or sell: and those who desire to have the papyrus at its very best bake it in an oven heated red-hot, and then eat it. Some too of these people live on fish alone, which they dry in the sun after having caught them and taken out the entrails, and then when they are dry, they use them for food.

93. Fish which swim in shoals are not much produced in the rivers, but are bred in the lakes, and they do as follows:--When there comes upon them the desire to breed, they swim out in shoals towards the sea; and the males lead the way shedding forth their milt as they go, while the females, coming after and swallowing it up, from it become impregnated: and when they have become full of young in the sea they swim up back again, each shoal to its own haunts. The same however no longer lead the way as before, but the lead comes now to the females, and they leading the way in shoals do just as the males did, that is to say they shed forth their eggs by a few grains at a time, and the males coming after swallow them up. Now these grains are fish, and from the grains which survive and are not swallowed, the fish grow which afterwards are bred up. Now those of the fish which are caught as they swim out to sea are found to be rubbed on the left side of the head, but those which are caught as they swim up again are rubbed on the right side. This happens to them because as they swim down to the sea they keep close to the land on the left side of the river, and again as they swim up they keep to the same side, approaching and touching the bank as much as they can, for fear doubtless of straying from their course by reason of the stream. When the Nile begins to swell, the hollow places of the land and the depressions by the side of the river first begin to fill, as the water soaks through from the river, and so soon as they become full of water, at once they are all filled with little fishes; and whence these are in all likelihood produced, I think that I perceive. In the preceding year, when the Nile goes down, the fish first lay eggs in the mud and then retire with the last of the retreating waters; and when the time comes round again, and the water once more comes over the land, from these eggs

forthwith are produced the fishes of which I speak.

94. Thus it is as regards the fish. And for anointing those of the Egyptians who dwell in the fens use oil from the castor-berry, which oil the Egyptians call /kiki/, and thus they do:--they sow along the banks of the rivers and pools these plants, which in a wild form grow of themselves in the land of the Hellenes; these are sown in Egypt and produce berries in great quantity but of an evil smell; and when they have gathered these, some cut them up and press the oil from them, others again roast them first and then boil them down and collect that which runs away from them. The oil is fat and not less suitable for burning than olive-oil, but it gives forth a disagreeable smell. 95. Against the gnats, which are very abundant, they have contrived as follows:--those who dwell above the fen-land are helped by the towers, to which they ascend when they go to rest; for the gnats by reason of the winds are not able to fly up high: but those who dwell in the fen-land have contrived another way instead of the towers, and this is it:--every man of them has got a casting net, with which by day he catches fish, but in the night he uses it for this purpose, that is to say he puts the casting-net round about the bed in which he sleeps, and then creeps in under it and goes to sleep: and the gnats, if he sleeps rolled up in a garment or a linen sheet, bite through these, but through the net they do not even attempt to bite.

96. Their boats with which they carry cargoes are made of the thorny acacia, of which the form is very like that of the Kyrenian lotos, and that which exudes from it is gum. From this tree they cut pieces of wood about two cubits in length and arrange them like bricks, fastening the boat together by running a great number of long bolts through the two-cubit pieces; and when they have thus fastened the boat together, they lay cross-pieces over the top, using no ribs for the sides; and within they caulk the seams with papyrus. They make one steering-oar for it, which is passed through the bottom of the boat; and they have a mast of acacia and sails of papyrus. These boats cannot sail up the river unless there be a very fresh wind blowing, but are towed from the shore: down-stream however they travel as follows:--they have a door-shaped crate made of tamarisk wood and reed mats sewn together, and also a stone of about two talents weight bored with a hole; and of these the boatman lets the crate float on in front of the boat, fastened with a rope, and the stone drag behind by

another rope. The crate then, as the force of the stream presses upon it, goes on swiftly and draws on the /baris/ (for so these boats are called), while the stone dragging after it behind and sunk deep in the water keeps its course straight. These boats they have in great numbers and some of them carry many thousands of talents' burden.

97. When the Nile comes over the land, the cities alone are seen rising above the water, resembling more nearly than anything else the islands in the Aegean sea; for the rest of Egypt becomes a sea and the cities alone rise above water. Accordingly, whenever this happens, they pass by water not now by the channels of the river but over the midst of the plain: for example, as one sails up from Naucratis to Memphis the passage is then close by the pyramids, whereas the usual passage is not the same even here, but goes by the point of the Delta and the city of Kercasoros; while if you sail over the plain to Naucratis from the sea and from Canobos, you will go by Anthylla and the city called after Archander. 98. Of these Anthylla is a city of note and is especially assigned to the wife of him who reigns over Egypt, to supply her with sandals, (this is the case since the time when Egypt came to be under the Persians): the other city seems to me to have its name from Archander the son-in-law of Danaos, who was the son of Phthios, the son of Achaios; for it is called the City of Archander. There might indeed be another Archander, but in any case the name is not Egyptian.

[...]

Book III, chapters 17-26 [on the Persian¹¹ expedition against Ethiopia]

17. After this Cambyses planned three several expeditions, one against the Carthaginians, another against the Ammonians, and a third against the "Long-lived" Ethiopians, who dwell in that part of Libya which is by the Southern Sea: and in forming these designs he resolved to send his naval force against the Carthaginians, and a body chosen from his land-army against the Ammonians; and to the Ethiopians to send spies first, both to see whether the table of the Sun existed really, which

¹¹ The Persian Empire, centered in what is today Iran, was the Great Power of the ancient world, and controlled Egypt, Asia Minor (today's Turkey) and Mesopotamia in addition to Iran. The Persians were very aggressive, even attempting (unsuccessfully) to conquer Greece in the 5th century BC.

is said to exist among these Ethiopians, and in addition to this to spy out all else, but pretending to be bearers of gifts for their king. 18. Now the table of the Sun is said to be as follows:--there is a meadow in the suburb of their city full of flesh-meat boiled of all four-footed creatures; and in this, it is said, those of the citizens who are in authority at the time place the flesh by night, managing the matter carefully, and by day any man who wishes comes there and feasts himself; and the natives (it is reported) say that the earth of herself produces these things continually. 19. Of such nature is the so-called table of the Sun said to be. So when Cambyses had resolved to send the spies, forthwith he sent for those men of the Ichthyophagoi¹² who understood the Ethiopian tongue, to come from the city of Elephantine: and while they were going to fetch these men, he gave command to the fleet to sail against Carthage: but the Phoenicians said that they would not do so, for they were bound not to do so by solemn vows, and they would not be acting piously if they made expedition against their own sons: and as the Phoenicians were not willing, the rest were rendered unequal to the attempt. Thus then the Carthaginians escaped being enslaved by the Persians; for Cambyses¹³ did not think it right to apply force to compel the Phoenicians, both because they had delivered themselves over to the Persians of their own accord and because the whole naval force was dependent upon the Phoenicians. Now the men of Cyprus also had delivered themselves over to the Persians, and were joining in the expedition against Egypt.

20. Then as soon as the Ichthyophagoi came to Cambyses from Elephantine, he sent them to the Ethiopians, enjoining them what they should say and giving them gifts to bear with them, that is to say a purple garment, and a collar of twisted gold with bracelets, and an alabaster box of perfumed ointment, and a jar of palm-wine. Now these Ethiopians to whom Cambyses was sending are said to be the tallest and the most beautiful of all men; and besides other customs which they are reported to have different from other men, there is especially this, it is said, with regard to their regal power,--whomsoever of the men of their nation they judge to be the tallest and to have strength in proportion to his stature, this man they appoint to reign over them. 21. So when the Ichthyophagoi had come to this people they

¹² Literally "fish-eaters".

¹³ A Persian Emperor

presented their gifts to the king who ruled over them, and at the same time they said as follows: "The king of the Persians Cambyses, desiring to become a friend and guest to thee, sent us with command to come to speech with thee, and he gives thee for gifts these things which he himself most delights to use." The Ethiopian however, perceiving that they had come as spies, spoke to them as follows: "Neither did the king of the Persians send you bearing gifts because he thought it a matter of great moment to become my guest-friend, nor do ye speak true things (for ye have come as spies of my kingdom), nor again is he a righteous man; for if he had been righteous he would not have coveted a land other than his own, nor would he be leading away into slavery men at whose hands he has received no wrong. Now however give him this bow and speak to him these words: The king of the Ethiopians gives this counsel to the king of the Persians, that when the Persians draw their bows (of equal size to mine) as easily as I do this, then he should march against the Long-lived Ethiopians, provided that he be superior in numbers; but until that time he should feel gratitude to the gods that they do not put it into the mind of the sons of the Ethiopians to acquire another land in addition to their own." 22. Having thus said and having unbent the bow, he delivered it to those who had come. Then he took the garment of purple and asked what it was and how it had been made: and when the Ichthyophagoi had told him the truth about the purple-fish and the dyeing of the tissue, he said that the men were deceitful and deceitful also were their garments. Then secondly he asked concerning the twisted gold of the collar and the bracelets; and when the Ichthyophagoi were setting forth to him the manner in which it was fashioned, the king broke into a laugh and said, supposing them to be fetters, that they had stronger fetters than those in their country. Thirdly he asked about the perfumed ointment, and when they had told him of the manner of its making and of the anointing with it, he said the same as he had said before about the garment. Then when he came to the wine, and had learned about the manner of its making, being exceedingly delighted with the taste of the drink he asked besides what food the king ate, and what was the longest time that a Persian man lived. They told him that he ate bread, explaining to him first the manner of growing the wheat, and they said that eighty years was the longest term of life appointed for a Persian man. In answer to this the Ethiopian said that he did not wonder that they lived but a few years, when they fed upon dung; for indeed they would not be able to live even so many years as

this, if they did not renew their vigour with the drink, indicating to the Ichthyophagoi the wine; for in regard to this, he said, his people were much behind the Persians. 23. Then when the Ichthyophagoi asked the king in return about the length of days and the manner of life of his people, he answered that the greater number of them reached the age of a hundred and twenty years, and some surpassed even this; and their food was boiled flesh and their drink was milk. And when the spies marvelled at the number of years, he conducted them to a certain spring, in the water of which they washed and became more sleek of skin, as if it were a spring of oil; and from it there came a scent as it were of violets: and the water of this spring, said the spies, was so exceedingly weak that it was not possible for anything to float upon it, either wood or any of those things which are lighter than wood, but they all went to the bottom. If this water which they have be really such as it is said to be, it would doubtless be the cause why the people are long-lived, as making use of it for all the purposes of life. Then when they departed from this spring, he led them to a prison-house for men, and there all were bound in fetters of gold. Now among these Ethiopians bronze is the rarest and most precious of all things. Then when they had seen the prison-house they saw also the so-called table of the Sun: 24, and after this they saw last of all their receptacles of dead bodies, which are said to be made of crystal in the following manner:--when they have dried the corpse, whether it be after the Egyptian fashion or in some other way, they cover it over completely with plaster[21] and then adorn it with painting, making the figure as far as possible like the living man. After this they put about it a block of crystal hollowed out; for this they dig up in great quantity and it is very easy to work: and the dead body being in the middle of the block is visible through it, but produces no unpleasant smell nor any other effect which is unseemly, and it has all its parts visible like the dead body itself. For a year then they who are most nearly related to the man keep the block in their house, giving to the dead man the first share of everything and offering to him sacrifices: and after this period they carry it out and set it up round about the city.

25. After they had seen all, the spies departed to go back; and when they reported these things, forthwith Cambyses was enraged and proceeded to march his army against the Ethiopians, not having ordered any provision of food nor considered with himself that he was

intending to march an army to the furthest extremities of the earth; but as one who is mad and not in his right senses, when he heard the report of the Ichthyophagoi he began the march, ordering those of the Hellenes who were present to remain behind in Egypt, and taking with him his whole land force: and when in the course of his march he had arrived at Thebes, he divided off about fifty thousand of his army, and these he enjoined to make slaves of the Ammonians and to set fire to the seat of the Oracle of Zeus, but he himself with the remainder of his army went on against the Ethiopians. But before the army had passed over the fifth part of the way, all that they had of provisions came to an end completely; and then after the provisions the beasts of burden also were eaten up and came to an end. Now if Cambyses when he perceived this had changed his plan and led his army back, he would have been a wise man in spite of his first mistake; as it was, however, he paid no regard, but went on forward without stopping. The soldiers accordingly, so long as they were able to get anything from the ground, prolonged their lives by eating grass; but when they came to the sand, some did a fearful deed, that is to say, out of each company of ten they selected by lot one of themselves and devoured him: and Cambyses, when he heard it, being alarmed by this eating of one another gave up the expedition against the Ethiopians and set forth to go back again; and he arrived at Thebes having suffered loss of a great number of his army. Then from Thebes he came down to Memphis and allowed the Hellenes to sail away home.

26. Thus fared the expedition against the Ethiopians: and those of the Persians who had been sent to march against the Ammonians set forth from Thebes and went on their way with guides; and it is known that they arrived at the city of Oasis, which is inhabited by Samians said to be of the Aischrionian tribe, and is distant seven days' journey from Thebes over sandy desert: now this place is called in the speech of the Hellenes the "Isle of the Blessed." It is said that the army reached this place, but from that point onwards, except the Ammonians themselves and those who have heard the account from them, no man is able to say anything about them; for they neither reached the Ammonians nor returned back. This however is added to the story by the Ammonians themselves:--they say that as the army was going from this Oasis through the sandy desert to attack them, and had got to a point about mid-way between them and the Oasis, while they were taking their morning meal a violent South Wind blew upon them, and bearing with it

heaps of the desert sand it buried them under it, and so they disappeared and were seen no more. Thus the Ammonians say that it came to pass with regard to this army.

[...]

Book IV, Chapters 168-199 [on Libya]

168. Now the Libyans have their dwelling as follows:--Beginning from Egypt, first of the Libyans are settled the Adyrmachidai, who practise for the most part the same customs as the Egyptians, but wear clothing similar to that of the other Libyans. Their women wear a bronze ring upon each leg, and they have long hair on their heads, and when they catch their lice, each one bites her own in retaliation and then throws them away. These are the only people of the Libyans who do this; and they alone display to the king their maidens when they are about to be married, and whosoever of them proves to be pleasing to the king is deflowered by him. These Adyrmachidai extend along the coast from Egypt as far as the port which is called Plynos. 169. Next after these come the Giligamai, occupying the country towards the West as far as the island of Aphrodisias. In the space within this limit lies off the coast the island of Platea, where the Kyrenians made their settlement; and on the coast of the mainland there is Port Menelaos, and Aziris, where the Kyrenians used to dwell. From this point begins the /silphion/and it extends along the coast from the island of Platea as far as the entrance of the Syrtis. This nation practises customs nearly resembling those of the rest. 170. Next to the Giligamai on the West are the Asbystai: these dwell above Kyrene, and the Asbystai do not reach down the sea, for the region along the sea is occupied by Kyrenians. These most of all the Libyans are drivers of four-horse chariots, and in the greater number of their customs they endeavour to imitate the Kyrenians. 171. Next after the Asbystai on the West come the Auchisai: these dwell above Barca and reach down to the sea by Euesperides: and in the middle of the country of the Auchisai dwell the Bacales, a small tribe, who reach down to the sea by the city of Taucheira in the territory of Barca: these practise the same customs as those above Kyrene. 172. Next after these Auchisai towards the West come the Nasamonians, a numerous race, who in the summer leave their flocks behind by the sea

and go up to the region of Augila to gather the fruit of the date-palms, which grow in great numbers and very large and are all fruit-bearing: these hunt the wingless locusts, and they dry them in the sun and then pound them up, and after that they sprinkle them upon milk and drink them. Their custom is for each man to have many wives, and they make their intercourse with them common in nearly the same manner as the Massagetai, that is they set up a staff in front of the door and so have intercourse. When a Nasamonian man marries his first wife, the custom is for the bride on the first night to go through the whole number of the guests having intercourse with them, and each man when he has lain with her gives a gift, whatsoever he has brought with him from his house. The forms of oath and of divination which they use are as follows:--they swear by the men among themselves who are reported to have been the most righteous and brave, by these, I say, laying hands upon their tombs; and they divine by visiting the sepulchral mounds of their ancestors and lying down to sleep upon them after having prayed; and whatsoever thing the man sees in his dream, this he accepts. They practise also the exchange of pledges in the following manner, that is to say, one gives the other to drink from his hand, and drinks himself from the hand of the other; and if they have no liquid, they take of the dust from the ground and lick it.

173. Adjoining the Nasamonians is the country of the Psylloi. These have perished utterly in the following manner:--The South Wind blowing upon them dried up all their cisterns of water, and their land was waterless, lying all within the Syrtis. They then having taken a resolve by common consent, marched in arms against the South Wind (I report that which is reported by the Libyans), and when they had arrived at the sandy tract, the South Wind blew and buried them in the sand. These then having utterly perished, the Nasamonians from that time forward possess their land. 174. Above these towards the South Wind in the region of wild beasts dwell the Garamantians, who fly from every man and avoid the company of all; and they neither possess any weapon of war, nor know how to defend themselves against enemies. 175. These dwell above the Nasamonians; and next to the Nasamonians along the sea coast towards the West come the Macai, who shave their hair so as to leave tufts, letting the middle of their hair grow long, but round this on all sides shaving it close to the skin; and for fighting they carry shields made of ostrich skins. Through their land the river Kinyps runs out into the sea, flowing from a hill called the

"Hill of the Charites." This Hill of the Charites is overgrown thickly with wood, while the rest of Libya which has been spoken of before is bare of trees; and the distance from the sea to this hill is two hundred furlongs. 176. Next to these Macai are the Gindanes, whose women wear each of them a number of anklets made of the skins of animals, for the following reason, as it is said:--for every man who has commerce with her she binds on an anklet, and the woman who has most is esteemed the best, since she has been loved by the greatest number of men. 177. In a peninsula which stands out into the sea from the land of these Gindanes dwell the Lotophagoi, who live by eating the fruit of the /lotos/ only. Now the fruit of the lotos is in size like that of the mastich-tree, and in flavour it resembles that of the date-palm. Of this fruit the Lotophagoi even make for themselves wine. 178. Next after the Lotophagoi along the sea-coast are the Machlyans, who also make use of the lotos, but less than those above mentioned. These extend to a great river named the river Triton, and this runs out into a great lake called Tritonis, in which there is an island named Phla. About this island they say there was an oracle given to the Lacedemonians that they should make a settlement in it. 179. The following moreover is also told, namely that Jason, when the Argo had been completed by him under Mount Pelion, put into it a hecatomb and with it also a tripod of bronze, and sailed round Pelopponese, desiring to come to Delphi; and when in sailing he got near Malea, a North Wind seized his ship and carried it off to Libya, and before he caught sight of land he had come to be in the shoals of the lake Tritonis. Then as he was at a loss how he should bring his ship forth, the story goes that Triton appeared to him and bade Jason give him the tripod, saying that he would show them the right course and let them go away without hurt: and when Jason consented to it, then Triton showed them the passage out between the shoals and set the tripod in his own temple, after having first uttered a prophecy over the tripod and having declared to Jason and his company the whole matter, namely that whensoever one of the descendants of those who sailed with him in the Argo should carry away this tripod, then it was determined by fate that a hundred cities of Hellenes should be established about the lake Tritonis. Having heard this the native Libyans concealed the tripod.

180. Next to these Machlyans are the Auseans. These and the Machlyans dwell round the lake Tritonis, and the river Triton is the boundary

between them: and while the Machlyans grow their hair long at the back of the head, the Auseans do so in front. At a yearly festival of Athene their maidens take their stand in two parties and fight against one another with stones and staves, and they say that in doing so they are fulfilling the rites handed down by their fathers for the divinity who was sprung from that land, whom we call Athene: and those of the maidens who die of the wounds received they call "false-maidens." But before they let them begin the fight they do this:--all join together and equip the maiden who is judged to be the fairest on each occasion, with a Corinthian helmet and with full Hellenic armour, and then causing her to go up into a chariot they conduct her round the lake. Now I cannot tell with what they equipped the maidens in old time, before the Hellenes were settled near them; but I suppose that they used to be equipped with Egyptian armour, for it is from Egypt that both the shield and the helmet have come to the Hellenes, as I affirm. They say moreover that Athene is the daughter of Poseidon and of the lake Tritonis, and that she had some cause of complaint against her father and therefore gave herself to Zeus, and Zeus made her his own daughter. Such is the story which these tell; and they have their intercourse with women in common, not marrying but having intercourse like cattle: and when the child of any woman has grown big, he is brought before a meeting of the men held within three months of that time, and whomsoever of the men the child resembles, his son he is accounted to be.

181. Thus then have been mentioned those nomad Libyans who live along the sea-coast: and above these inland is the region of Libya which has wild beasts; and above the wild-beast region there stretches a raised belt of sand, extending from Thebes of the Egyptians to the Pillars of Heracles. In this belt at intervals of about ten days' journey there are fragments of salt in great lumps forming hills, and at the top of each hill there shoots up from the middle of the salt a spring of water cold and sweet; and about the spring dwell men, at the furthest limit towards the desert, and above the wild-beast region. First, at a distance of ten days' journey from Thebes, are the Ammonians, whose temple is derived from that of the Theban Zeus, for the image of Zeus in Thebes also, as I have said before,[162] has the head of a ram. These, as it chanced, have also other water of a spring, which in the early morning is warm; at the time when the market fills, cooler; when midday comes, it is quite cold, and then they water their

gardens; but as the day declines, it abates from its coldness, until at last, when the sun sets, the water is warm; and it continues to increase in heat still more until it reaches midnight, when it boils and throws up bubbles; and when midnight passes, it becomes cooler gradually till dawn of day. This spring is called the fountain of the Sun.

182. After the Ammonians, as you go on along the belt of sand, at an interval again of ten days' journey there is a hill of salt like that of the Ammonians, and a spring of water, with men dwelling about it; and the name of this place is Augila. To this the Nasamonians come year by year to gather the fruit of the date-palms. 183. From Augila at a distance again of ten days' journey there is another hill of salt and spring of water and a great number of fruit-bearing date-palms, as there are also in the other places: and men dwell here who are called the Garmantians, a very great nation, who carry earth to lay over the salt and then sow crops. From this point is the shortest way to the Lotophagoi, for from these it is a journey of thirty days to the country of the Garmantians. Among them also are produced the cattle which feed backwards; and they feed backwards for this reason, because they have their horns bent down forwards, and therefore they walk backwards as they feed; for forwards they cannot go, because the horns run into the ground in front of them; but in nothing else do they differ from other cattle except in this and in the thickness and firmness to the touch of their hide. These Garamantians of whom I speak hunt the "Cave-dwelling" Ethiopians with their four-horse chariots, for the Cave-dwelling Ethiopians are the swiftest of foot of all men about whom we hear report made: and the Cave-dwellers feed upon serpents and lizards and such creeping things, and they use a language which resembles no other, for in it they squeak just like bats.

184. From the Garmantians at a distance again of ten days' journey there is another hill of salt and spring of water, and men dwell round it called Atarantians, who alone of all men about whom we know are nameless; for while all taken together have the name Atarantians, each separate man of them has no name given to him. These utter curses against the Sun when he is at his height, and moreover revile him with all manner of foul terms, because he oppresses them by his burning heat, both themselves and their land. After this at a distance

of ten days' journey there is another hill of salt and spring of water, and men dwell round it. Near this salt hill is a mountain named Atlas, which is small in circuit and rounded on every side; and so exceedingly lofty is it said to be, that it is not possible to see its summits, for clouds never leave them either in the summer or in the winter. This the natives say is the pillar of the heaven. After this mountain these men got their name, for they are called Atlantians; and it is said that they neither eat anything that has life nor have any dreams.

185. As far as these Atlantians I am able to mention in order the names of those who are settled in the belt of sand; but for the parts beyond these I can do so no more. However, the belt extends as far as the Pillars of Heracles and also in the parts outside them: and there is a mine of salt in it at a distance of ten days' journey from the Atlantians, and men dwelling there; and these all have their houses built of the lumps of salt, since these parts of Libya which we have now reached are without rain; for if it rained, the walls being made of salt would not be able to last: and the salt is dug up there both white and purple in colour. Above the sand-belt, in the parts which are in the direction of the South Wind and towards the interior of Libya, the country is uninhabited, without water and without wild beasts, rainless and treeless, and there is no trace of moisture in it.

186. I have said that from Egypt as far as the lake Tritonis Libyans dwell who are nomads, eating flesh and drinking milk; and these do not taste at all of the flesh of cows, for the same reason as the Egyptians also abstain from it, nor do they keep swine. Moreover the women of the Kyrenians too think it not right to eat cows' flesh, because of the Egyptian Isis, and they even keep fasts and celebrate festivals for her; and the women of Barca, in addition from cows' flesh, do not taste of swine either. 187. Thus it is with these matters: but in the region to the West of lake Tritonis the Libyans cease to be nomads, and they do not practise the same customs, nor do to their children anything like that which the nomads are wont to do; for the nomad Libyans, whether all of them I cannot say for certain, but many of them, do as follows:--when their children are four years old, they burn with a greasy piece of sheep's wool the veins in the crowns of their heads, and some of them burn the veins of the temples,

so that for all their lives to come the cold humour may not run down from their heads and do them hurt: and for this reason it is (they say) that they are so healthy; for the Libyans are in truth the most healthy of all races concerning which we have knowledge, whether for this reason or not I cannot say for certain, but the most healthy they certainly are: and if, when they burn the children, a convulsion comes on, they have found out a remedy for this; for they pour upon them the water of a he-goat and so save them. I report that which is reported by the Libyans themselves. 188. The following is the manner of sacrifice which the nomads have:--they cut off a part of the animal's ear as a first offering and throw it over the house, and having done this they twist its neck. They sacrifice only to the Sun and the Moon; that is to say, to these all the Libyans sacrifice, but those who dwell round the lake Tritonis sacrifice most of all to Athene, and next to Triton and Poseidon. 189. It would appear also that the Hellenes made the dress and the /aigis/ of the images of Athene after the model of the Libyan women; for except that the dress of the Libyan women is of leather, and the tassels which hang from their /aigis/ are not formed of serpents but of leather thongs, in all other respects Athene is dressed like them. Moreover the name too declares that the dress of the figures of Pallas has come from Libya, for the Libyan women wear over their other garments bare goat-skins (/aigeas/) with tasselled fringes and coloured over with red madder, and from the name of these goat-skins the Hellenes formed the name /aigis/. I think also that in these regions first arose the practice of crying aloud during the performance of sacred rites, for the Libyan women do this very well. The Hellenes learnt from the Libyans also the yoking together of four horses. 190. The nomads bury those who die just in the same manner as the Hellenes, except only the Nasamonians: these bury bodies in a sitting posture, taking care at the moment when the man expires to place him sitting and not to let him die lying down on his back. They have dwellings composed of the stems of asphodel entwined with rushes, and so made that they can be carried about. Such are the customs followed by these tribes.

191. On the West of the river Triton next after the Auseans come Libyans who are tillers of the soil, and whose custom it is to possess fixed habitations; and they are called Maxyans. They grow their hair long on the right side of their heads and cut it short upon the left, and smear their bodies over with red ochre. These say that they are of

the men who came from Troy.

This country and the rest of Libya which is towards the West is both much more frequented by wild beasts and much more thickly wooded than the country of the nomads: for whereas the part of Libya which is situated towards the East, where the nomads dwell, is low-lying and sandy up to the river Triton, that which succeeds it towards the West, the country of those who till the soil, is exceedingly mountainous and thickly-wooded and full of wild beasts: for in the land of these are found both the monstrous serpent and the lion and the elephant, and bears and venomous snakes and horned asses, besides the dog-headed men, and the headless men with their eyes set in their breasts (at least so say the Libyans about them), and the wild men and wild women, and a great multitude of other beasts which are not fabulous like these. 192. In the land of the nomads however there exist none of these, but other animals as follows:--white-rump antelopes, gazelles, buffaloes, asses, not the horned kind but others which go without water (for in fact these never drink), oryxes, whose horns are made into the sides of the Phœnician lyre (this animal is in size about equal to an ox), small foxes, hyenas, porcupines, wild rams, wolves, jackals, panthers, borys, land-crocodiles about three cubits in length and very much resembling lizards, ostriches, and small snakes, each with one horn: these wild animals there are in this country, as well as those which exist elsewhere, except the stag and the wild-boar; but Libya has no stags nor wild boars at all. Also there are in this country three kinds of mice, one is called the "two-legged" mouse, another the /zegeris/ (a name which is Libyan and signifies in the Hellenic tongue a "hill"), and a third the "prickly" mouse. There are also weasels produced in the /silphion/, which are very like those of Tartessos. Such are the wild animals which the land of the Libyans possesses, so far as we were able to discover by inquiries extended as much as possible.

193. Next to the Maxyan Libyans are the Zæuekes, whose women drive their chariots for them to war. 194. Next to these are the Gyzantes, among whom honey is made in great quantity by bees, but in much greater quantity still it is said to be made by men, who work at it as a trade. However that may be, these all smear themselves over with red ochre and eat monkeys, which are produced in very great numbers upon their mountains. 195. Opposite these, as the

Carthaginians say, there lies an island called Kyrauis, two hundred furlongs in length but narrow, to which one may walk over from the mainland; and it is full of olives and vines. In it they say there is a pool, from which the native girls with birds' feathers smeared over with pitch bring up gold-dust out of the mud. Whether this is really so I do not know, but I write that which is reported; and nothing is impossible, for even in Zakynthos I saw myself pitch brought up out of a pool of water. There are there several pools, and the largest of them measures seventy feet each way and is two fathoms in depth. Into this they plunge a pole with a myrtle-branch bound to it, and then with the branch of the myrtle they bring up pitch, which has the smell of asphalt, but in other respects it is superior to the pitch of Pieria. This they pour into a pit dug near the pool; and when they have collected a large quantity, then they pour it into the jars from the pit: and whatever thing falls into the pool goes under ground and reappears in the sea, which is distant about four furlongs from the pool. Thus then the report about the island lying near the coast of Libya is also probably enough true.

196. The Carthaginians say also this, namely that there is a place in Libya and men dwelling there, outside the Pillars of Heracles, to whom when they have come and have taken the merchandise forth from their ships, they set it in order along the beach and embark again in their ships, and after that they raise a smoke; and the natives of the country seeing the smoke come to the sea, and then they lay down gold as an equivalent for the merchandise and retire to a distance away from the merchandise. The Carthaginians upon that disembark and examine it, and if the gold is in their opinion sufficient for the value of the merchandise, they take it up and go their way; but if not, they embark again in their ships and sit there; and the others approach and straightway add more gold to the former, until they satisfy them: and they say that neither party wrongs the other; for neither do the Carthaginians lay hands on the gold until it is made equal to the value of their merchandise, nor do the others lay hands on the merchandise until the Carthaginians have taken the gold.

197. These are the Libyan tribes whom we are able to name; and of these the greater number neither now pay any regard to the king of the Medes nor did they then. Thus much also I have to say about this land, namely that it is occupied by four races and no more, so far as we

know; and of these races two are natives of the soil and the other two not so; for the Libyans and the Ethiopians are natives, the one race dwelling in the Northern parts of Libya and the other in the Southern, while the Phoenicians and the Hellenes are strangers.

198. I think moreover that (besides other things) in goodness of soil Libya does not very greatly excel as compared with Asia or Europe, except only the region of Kinyps, for the same name is given to the land as to the river. This region is equal to the best of lands in bringing forth the fruit of Demeter, nor does it at all resemble the rest of Libya; for it has black soil and is watered by springs, and neither has it fear of drought nor is it hurt by drinking too abundantly of rain; for rain there is in this part of Libya. Of the produce of the crops the same measures hold good here as for the Babylonian land. And that is good land also which the Euesperites occupy, for when it bears best it produces a hundred-fold, but the land in the region of Kinyps produces sometimes as much as three-hundred-fold. 199. Moreover the land of Kyrene, which is the highest land of the part of Libya which is occupied by nomads, has within its confines three seasons of harvest, at which we may marvel: for the parts by the sea-coasts first have their fruits ripe for reaping and for gathering the vintage; and when these have been gathered in, the parts which lie above the sea-side places, those situated in the middle, which they call the hills, are ripe for the gathering in; and as soon as this middle crop has been gathered in, that in the highest part of the land comes to perfection and is ripe; so that by the time the first crop has been eaten and drunk up, the last is just coming in. Thus the harvest for the Kyrenians lasts eight months. Let so much as has been said suffice for these things.

[...]

Book III, chapters 98-116 [on India and the edges of the Earth]

98. Now this great quantity of gold, out of which the Indians bring in to the king the gold-dust which has been mentioned, is obtained by them in a manner which I shall tell:--That part of the Indian land which is towards the rising sun is sand; for of all the peoples in Asia of which we know or about which any certain report is given, the

Indians dwell furthest away towards the East and the sunrising; seeing that the country to the East of the Indians is desert on account of the sand. Now there are many tribes of Indians, and they do not agree with one another in language; and some of them are pastoral and others not so, and some dwell in the swamps of the river and feed upon raw fish, which they catch by fishing from boats made of cane; and each boat is made of one joint of cane. These Indians of which I speak wear clothing made of rushes: they gather and cut the rushes from the river and then weave them together into a kind of mat and put it on like a corslet. 99. Others of the Indians, dwelling to the East of these, are pastoral and eat raw flesh: these are called Padaians, and they practise the following customs:--whenever any of their tribe falls ill, whether it be a woman or a man, if a man then the men who are his nearest associates put him to death, saying that he is wasting away with the disease and his flesh is being spoilt for them: and meanwhile he denies stoutly and says that he is not ill, but they do not agree with him; and after they have killed him they feast upon his flesh: but if it be a woman who falls ill, the women who are her greatest intimates do to her in the same manner as the men do in the other case. For in fact even if a man has come to old age they slay him and feast upon him; but very few of them come to be reckoned as old, for they kill every one who falls into sickness, before he reaches old age. 100. Other Indians have on the contrary a manner of life as follows:--they neither kill any living thing nor do they sow any crops nor is it their custom to possess houses; but they feed on herbs, and they have a grain of the size of millet, in a sheath, which grows of itself from the ground; this they gather and boil with the sheath, and make it their food: and whenever any of them falls into sickness, he goes to the desert country and lies there, and none of them pay any attention either to one who is dead or to one who is sick. 101. The sexual intercourse of all these Indians of whom I have spoken is open like that of cattle, and they have all one colour of skin, resembling that of the Ethiopians: moreover the seed which they emit is not white like that of other races, but black like their skin; and the Ethiopians also are similar in this respect. These tribes of Indians dwell further off than the Persian power extends, and towards the South Wind, and they never became subjects of Darius¹⁴.

¹⁴A Persian Emperor.

102. Others however of the Indians are on the borders of the city of Caspatyros and the country of Pactyike, dwelling towards the North of the other Indians; and they have a manner of living nearly the same as that of the Bactrians: these are the most warlike of the Indians, and these are they who make expeditions for the gold. For in the parts where they live it is desert on account of the sand; and in this desert and sandy tract are produced ants, which are in size smaller than dogs but larger than foxes, for there are some of them kept at the residence of the king of Persia, which are caught here. These ants then make their dwelling under ground and carry up the sand just in the same manner as the ants found in the land of the Hellenes, which they themselves also very much resemble in form; and the sand which is brought up contains gold. To obtain this sand the Indians make expeditions into the desert, each one having yoked together three camels, placing a female in the middle and a male like a trace-horse to draw by each side. On this female he mounts himself, having arranged carefully that she shall be taken to be yoked from young ones, the more lately born the better. For their female camels are not inferior to horses in speed, and moreover they are much more capable of bearing weights. 103. As to the form of the camel, I do not here describe it, since the Hellenes for whom I write are already acquainted with it, but I shall tell that which is not commonly known about it, which is this:--the camel has in the hind legs four thighs and four knees, and its organs of generation are between the hind legs, turned towards the tail. 104. The Indians, I say, ride out to get the gold in the manner and with the kind of yoking which I have described, making calculations so that they may be engaged in carrying it off at the time when the greatest heat prevails; for the heat causes the ants to disappear underground. Now among these nations the sun is hottest in the morning hours, not at midday as with others, but from sunrise to the time of closing the market: and during this time it produces much greater heat than at midday in Hellas, so that it is said that then they drench themselves with water. Midday however has about equal degree of heat with the Indians as with other men, while after midday their sun becomes like the morning sun with other men, and after this, as it goes further away, it produces still greater coolness, until at last at sunset it makes the air very cool indeed. 105. When the Indians have come to the place with bags, they fill them with the sand and ride away back as quickly as they can, for forthwith the ants, perceiving, as the Persians allege, by the smell, begin to

pursue them: and this animal, they say, is superior to every other creature in swiftness, so that unless the Indians got a start in their course, while the ants were gathering together, not one of them would escape. So then the male camels, for they are inferior in speed of running to the females, if they drag behind are even let loose from the side of the female, one after the other; the females however, remembering the young which they left behind, do not show any slackness in their course. Thus it is that the Indians get most part of the gold, as the Persians say; there is however other gold also in their land obtained by digging, but in smaller quantities.

106. It seems indeed that the extremities of the inhabited world had allotted to them by nature the fairest things, just as it was the lot of Hellas to have its seasons far more fairly tempered than other lands: for first, India is the most distant of inhabited lands towards the East, as I have said a little above, and in this land not only the animals, birds as well as four-footed beasts, are much larger than in other places (except the horses, which are surpassed by those of Media called Nessaian), but also there is gold in abundance there, some got by digging, some brought down by rivers, and some carried off as I explained just now: and there also the trees which grow wild produce wool which surpasses in beauty and excellence that from sheep, and the Indians wear clothing obtained from these trees. 107. Then again Arabia is the furthest of inhabited lands in the direction of the midday, and in it alone of all lands grow frankincense and myrrh and cassia and cinnamon and gum-mastich. All these except myrrh are got with difficulty by the Arabians. Frankincense they collect by burning the storax, which is brought thence to the Hellenes by the Phoenicians, by burning this, I say, so as to produce smoke they take it; for these trees which produce frankincense are guarded by winged serpents, small in size and of various colours, which watch in great numbers about each tree, of the same kind as those which attempt to invade Egypt:[97a] and they cannot be driven away from the trees by any other thing but only the smoke of storax. 108. The Arabians say also that all the world would have been by this time filled with these serpents, if that did not happen with regard to them which I knew happened with regard to vipers: and it seems that the Divine Providence, as indeed was to be expected, seeing that it is wise, has made all those animals prolific which are of cowardly spirit and good for food, in order that they may not be all eaten up and their race fail, whereas it has made

those which are bold and noxious to have small progeny. For example, because the hare is hunted by every beast and bird as well as by man, therefore it is so very prolific as it is: and this is the only one of all beasts which becomes pregnant again before the former young are born, and has in its womb some of its young covered with fur and others bare; and while one is just being shaped in the matrix, another is being conceived. Thus it is in this case; whereas the lioness, which is the strongest and most courageous of creatures, produces one cub once only in her life; for when she produces young she casts out her womb together with her young; and the cause of it is this:--when the cub being within the mother begins to move about, then having claws by far sharper than those of any other beast he tears the womb, and as he grows larger he proceeds much further in his scratching: at last the time of birth approaches and there is now nothing at all left of it in a sound condition. 109. Just so also, if vipers and the winged serpents of the Arabians were produced in the ordinary course of their nature, man would not be able to live upon the earth; but as it is, when they couple with one another and the male is in the act of generation, as he lets go from him the seed, the female seizes hold of his neck, and fastening on to it does not relax her hold till she has eaten it through. The male then dies in the manner which I have said, but the female pays the penalty of retribution for the male in this manner:--the young while they are still in the womb take vengeance for their father by eating through their mother, and having eaten through her belly they thus make their way out for themselves. Other serpents however, which are not hurtful to man, produce eggs and hatch from them a very large number of offspring. Now vipers are distributed over all the earth; but the others, which are winged, are found in great numbers together in Arabia and in no other land: therefore it is that they appear to be numerous. 110. This frankincense then is obtained thus by the Arabians; and cassia is obtained as follows:--they bind up in cows'-hide and other kinds of skins all their body and their face except only the eyes, and then go to get the cassia. This grows in a pool not very deep, and round the pool and in it lodge, it seems, winged beasts nearly resembling bats, and they squeak horribly and are courageous in fight. These they must keep off from their eyes, and so cut the cassia. 111. Cinnamon they collect in a yet more marvellous manner than this: for where it grows and what land produces it they are not able to tell, except only that some say (and it is a probable account) that it grows in those regions where Dionysos was

brought up; and they say that large birds carry those dried sticks which we have learnt from the Phoenicians to call cinnamon, carry them, I say, to nests which are made of clay and stuck on to precipitous sides of mountains, which man can find no means of scaling. With regard to this then the Arabians practise the following contrivance:-- they divide up the limbs of the oxen and asses that die and of their other beasts of burden, into pieces as large as convenient, and convey them to these places, and when they have laid them down not far from the nests, they withdraw to a distance from them: and the birds fly down and carry the limbs of the beasts of burden off to their nests; and these are not able to bear them, but break down and fall to the earth; and the men come up to them and collect the cinnamon. Thus cinnamon is collected and comes from this nation to the other countries of the world. 112. Gum-mastich however, which the Arabians call /ladanon/, comes in a still more extraordinary manner; for though it is the most sweet-scented of all things, it comes in the most evil-scented thing, since it is found in the beards of he-goats, produced there like resin from wood: this is of use for the making of many perfumes, and the Arabians use it more than anything else as incense. 113. Let what we have said suffice with regard to spices; and from the land of Arabia there blows a scent of them most marvellously sweet. They have also two kinds of sheep which are worthy of admiration and are not found in any other land: the one kind has the tail long, not less than three cubits in length; and if one should allow these to drag these after them, they would have sores from their tails being worn away against the ground; but as it is, every one of the shepherds knows enough of carpentering to make little cars, which they tie under the tails, fastening the tail of each animal to a separate little car. The other kind of sheep has the tail broad, even as much as a cubit in breadth.

114. As one passes beyond the place of the midday, the Ethiopian land is that which extends furthest of all inhabited lands towards the sunset. This produces both gold in abundance and huge elephants and trees of all kinds growing wild and ebony, and men who are of all men the tallest, the most beautiful and the most long-lived.

115. These are the extremities in Asia and in Libya; but as to the extremities of Europe towards the West, I am not able to speak with certainty: for neither do I accept the tale that there is a river

called in Barbarian tongue Eridanos, flowing into the sea which lies towards the North Wind, whence it is said that amber comes; nor do I know of the real existence of "Tin Islands" from which tin comes to us: for first the name Eridanos itself declares that it is Hellenic and that it does not belong to a Barbarian speech, but was invented by some poet; and secondly I am not able to hear from any one who has been an eye-witness, though I took pains to discover this, that there is a sea on the other side of Europe. However that may be, tin and amber certainly come to us from the extremity of Europe. 116. Then again towards the North of Europe, there is evidently a quantity of gold by far larger than in any other land: as to how it is got, here again I am not able to say for certain, but it is said to be carried off from the griffins by Arimaspians, a one-eyed race of men. But I do not believe this tale either, that nature produces one-eyed men which in all other respects are like other men. However, it would seem that the extremities which bound the rest of the world on every side and enclose it in the midst, possess the things which by us are thought to be the most beautiful and the most rare.

[...]

Book IV, chapters 1-45 [the Scythians and the lands of the north]

1. After Babylon had been taken, the march of Darius himself against the Scythians took place: for now that Asia was flourishing in respect of population, and large sums were being gathered in as revenue, Darius formed the desire to take vengeance upon the Scythians, because they had first invaded the Median land and had overcome in fight those who opposed them; and thus they had been the beginners of wrong. The Scythians in truth, as I have before said, had ruled over Upper Asia for eight-and-twenty years; for they had invaded Asia in their pursuit of the Kimmerians, and they had deposed the Medes from their rule, who had rule over Asia before the Scythians came. Now when the Scythians had been absent from their own land for eight-and-twenty years, as they were returning to it after that interval of time, they were met by a contest not less severe than that which they had had with the Medes, since they found an army of no mean size opposing them. For the wives of the Scythians, because their husbands were absent from them for a long time, had

associated with the slaves. 2. Now the Scythians put out the eyes of all their slaves because of the milk which they drink; and they do as follows:--they take blow-pipes of bone just like flutes, and these they insert into the vagina of the mare and blow with their mouths, and others milk while they blow: and they say that they do this because the veins of the mare are thus filled, being blown out, and so the udder is let down. When they had drawn the milk they pour it into wooden vessels hollowed out, and they set the blind slaves in order about the vessels and agitate the milk. Then that which comes to the top they skim off, considering it the more valuable part, whereas they esteem that which settles down to be less good than the other. For this reason the Scythians put out the eyes of all whom they catch; for they are not tillers of the soil but nomads. 3. From these their slaves then, I say, and from their wives had been born and bred up a generation of young men, who having learnt the manner of their birth set themselves to oppose the Scythians as they were returning from the Medes. And first they cut off their land by digging a broad trench extending from the Tauric mountains to the Maiotian lake, at the point where this is broadest; then afterwards when the Scythians attempted to invade the land, they took up a position against them and fought; and as they fought many times, and the Scythians were not able to get any advantage in the fighting, one of them said: "What a thing is this that we are doing, Scythians! We are fighting against our own slaves, and we are not only becoming fewer in number ourselves by being slain in battle, but also we are killing them, and so we shall have fewer to rule over in future. Now therefore to me it seems good that we leave spears and bows and that each one take his horse-whip and so go up close to them: for so long as they saw us with arms in our hands, they thought themselves equal to us and of equal birth; but when they shall see that we have whips instead of arms, they will perceive that they are our slaves, and having acknowledged this they will not await our onset." 4. When they heard this, the Scythians proceeded to do that which he said, and the others being panic-stricken by that which was done forgot their fighting and fled. Thus the Scythians had ruled over Asia; and in such manner, when they were driven out again by the Medes, they had returned to their own land. For this Darius wished to take vengeance upon them, and was gathering together an army to go against them.

5. Now the Scythians say that their nation is the youngest of all nations, and that this came to pass as follows:--The first man who ever existed in this region, which then was desert, was one named Targitaos: and of this Targitaos they say, though I do not believe it for my part, however they say the parents were Zeus and the daughter of the river Borysthenes. Targitaos, they report, was produced from some such origin as this, and of him were begotten three sons, Lipoxaïs and Arpoxaïs and the youngest Colaxaïs. In the reign of These there came down from heaven certain things wrought of gold, a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a cup, and fell in the Scythian land: and first the eldest saw and came near them, desiring to take them, but the gold blazed with fire when he approached it: then when he had gone away from it, the second approached, and again it did the same thing. These then the gold repelled by blazing with fire; but when the third and youngest came up to it, the flame was quenched, and he carried them to his own house. The elder brothers then, acknowledging the significance of this thing, delivered the whole of the kingly power to the youngest. 6. From Lixopaïs, they say, are descended those Scythians who are called the race of the Auchatai; from the middle brother Arpoxaïs those who are called Catiaroi and Traspians, and from the youngest of them the "Royal" tribe, who are called Paralatai: and the whole together are called, they say, Scolotoi, after the name of their king; but the Hellenes gave them the name of Scythians. 7. Thus the Scythians say they were produced; and from the time of their origin, that is to say from the first king Targitaos, to the passing over of Darius against them, they say that there is a period of a thousand years and no more. Now this sacred gold is guarded by the kings with the utmost care, and they visit it every year with solemn sacrifices of propitiation: moreover if any one goes to sleep while watching in the open air over this gold during the festival, the Scythians say that he does not live out the year; and there is given him for this so much land as he shall ride round himself on his horse in one day. Now as the land was large, Colaxaïs, they say, established three kingdoms for his sons; and of these he made one larger than the rest, and in this the gold is kept. But as to the upper parts which lie on the North side of those who dwell above this land, they say one can neither see nor pass through any further by reason of feathers which are poured down; for both the earth and the air are full of feathers, and this is that which shuts off the

view.

8. Thus say the Scythians about themselves and about the region above them; but the Hellenes who dwell about the Pontus say as follows:-- Heracles driving the cattle of Geryones came to this land, then desert, which the Scythians now inhabit; and Geryones, says the tale, dwelt away from the region of the Pontus, living in the island called by the Hellenes Erytheia, near Gadeira which is outside the Pillars of Heracles by the Ocean.--As to the Ocean, they say indeed that it flows round the whole earth beginning from the place of the sunrising, but they do not prove this by facts.--From thence Heracles came to the land now called Scythia; and as a storm came upon him together with icy cold, he drew over him his lion's skin and went to sleep. Meanwhile the mares harnessed in his chariot disappeared by a miraculous chance, as they were feeding. 9. Then when Heracles woke he sought for them; and having gone over the whole land, at last he came to the region which is called Hylaia; and there he found in a cave a kind of twofold creature formed by the union of a maiden and a serpent, whose upper parts from the buttocks upwards were those of a woman, but her lower parts were those of a snake. Having seen her and marvelled at her, he asked her then whether she had seen any mares straying anywhere; and she said that she had them herself and would not give them up until he lay with her; and Heracles lay with her on condition of receiving them. She then tried to put off the giving back of the mares, desiring to have Heracles with her as long as possible, while he on the other hand desired to get the mares and depart; and at last she gave them back and said: "These mares when they came hither I saved for thee, and thou didst give me reward for saving them; for I have by thee three sons. Tell me then, what must I do with these when they shall be grown to manhood, whether I shall settle them here, for over this land I have power alone, or send them away to thee?" She thus asked of him, and he, they say, replied: "When thou seest that the boys are grown to men, do this and thou shalt not fail of doing right:--whichsoever of them thou seest able to stretch this bow as I do now, and to be girded with this girdle, him cause to be the settler of this land; but whosoever of them fails in the deeds which I enjoin, send him forth out of the land: and if thou shalt do thus, thou wilt both have delight thyself and perform that which has been enjoined to thee." 10. Upon this he drew one of his bows (for up to that time Heracles, they say, was wont to carry two) and showed her

the girdle, and then he delivered to her both the bow and the girdle, which had at the end of its clasp a golden cup; and having given them he departed. She then, when her sons had been born and had grown to be men, gave them names first, calling one of them Agathyrsos and the next Gelonos and the youngest Skythes; then bearing in mind the charge given to her, she did that which was enjoined. And two of her sons, Agathyrsos and Gelonos, not having proved themselves able to attain to the task set before them, departed from the land, being cast out by her who bore them; but Skythes the youngest of them performed the task and remained in the land: and from Skythes the son of Heracles were descended, they say, the succeeding kings of the Scythians (Skythians): and they say moreover that it is by reason of the cup that the Scythians still even to this day wear cups attached to their girdles: and this alone his mother contrived for Skythes. Such is the story told by the Hellenes who dwell about the Pontus.

11. There is however also another story, which is as follows, and to this I am most inclined myself. It is to the effect that the nomad Scythians dwelling in Asia, being hard pressed in war by the Massagetai, left their abode and crossing the river Araxes came towards the Kimmerian land (for the land which now is occupied by the Scythians is said to have been in former times the land of the Kimmerians); and the Kimmerians, when the Scythians were coming against them, took counsel together, seeing that a great host was coming to fight against them; and it proved that their opinions were divided, both opinions being vehemently maintained, but the better being that of their kings: for the opinion of the people was that it was necessary to depart and that they ought not to run the risk of fighting against so many, but that of the kings was to fight for their land with those who came against them: and as neither the people were willing by means to agree to the counsel of the kings nor the kings to that of the people, the people planned to depart without fighting and to deliver up the land to the invaders, while the kings resolved to die and to be laid in their own land, and not to flee with the mass of the people, considering the many goods of fortune which they had enjoyed, and the many evils which it might be supposed would come upon them, if they fled from their native land. Having resolved upon this, they parted into two bodies, and making their numbers equal they fought with one another: and when these had all been killed by one another's hands, then the people of the Kimmerians buried them by

the bank of the river Tyras (where their burial-place is still to be seen), and having buried them, then they made their way out from the land, and the Scythians when they came upon it found the land deserted of its inhabitants. 12. And there are at the present time in the land of Scythia Kimmerian walls, and a Kimmerian ferry; and there is also a region which is called Kimmeria, and the so-called Kimmerian Bosphorus. It is known moreover that the Kimmerians, in their flight to Asia from the Scythians, also made a settlement on that peninsula on which now stands the Hellenic city of Sinope; and it is known too that the Scythians pursued them and invaded the land of Media, having missed their way; for while the Kimmerians kept ever along by the sea in their flight, the Scythians pursued them keeping Caucasus on their right hand, until at last they invaded Media, directing their course inland. This then which has been told is another story, and it is common both to Hellenes and Barbarians.

13. Aristeas however the son of Caÿstrobios, a man of Proconnesos, said in the verses which he composed, that he came to the land of the Issedonians being possessed by Phœbus, and that beyond the Issedonians dwelt Arimaspians, a one-eyed race, and beyond these the gold-guarding griffins, and beyond them the Hyperboreans extending as far as the sea: and all these except the Hyperboreans, beginning with the Arimaspians, were continually making war on their neighbours, and the Issedonians were gradually driven out of their country by the Arimaspians and the Scythians by the Issedonians, and so the Kimmerians, who dwelt on the Southern Sea, being pressed by the Scythians left their land. Thus neither does he agree in regard to this land with the report of the Scythians.

14. As to Aristeas who composed this, I have said already whence he was; and I will tell also the tale which I heard about him in Proconnesos and Kyzicos. They say that Aristeas, who was in birth inferior to none of the citizens, entered into a fuller's shop in Proconnesos and there died; and the fuller closed his workshop and went away to report the matter to those who were related to the dead man. And when the news had been spread abroad about the city that Aristeas was dead, a man of Kyzicos who had come from the town of Artake entered into controversy with those who said so, and declared that he had met him going towards Kyzicos and had spoken with him: and while he was vehement in dispute, those who were related to the dead

man came to the fuller's shop with the things proper in order to take up the corpse for burial; and when the house was opened, Aristeas was not found there either dead or alive. In the seventh year after this he appeared at Proconnesos and composed those verses which are now called by the Hellenes the /Arimaspeia/, and having composed them he disappeared the second time. 15. So much is told by these cities; and what follows I know happened to the people of Metapontion in Italy two hundred and forty years after the second disappearance of Aristeas, as I found by putting together the evidence at Proconnesos and Metapontion. The people of Metapontion say that Aristeas himself appeared in their land and bade them set up an altar of Apollo and place by its side a statue bearing the name of Aristeas of Proconnesos; for he told them that to their land alone of all the Italiotes Apollo had come, and he, who now was Aristeas, was accompanying him, being then a raven when he accompanied the god. Having said this he disappeared; and the Metapontines say that they sent to Delphi and asked the god what the apparition of the man meant: and the Pythian prophetess bade them obey the command of the apparition, and told them that if they obeyed, it would be the better for them. They therefore accepted this answer and performed the commands; and there stands a statue now bearing the name of Aristeas close by the side of the altar dedicated to Apollo, and round it stand laurel trees; and the altar is set up in the market-place. Let this suffice which has been said about Aristeas.

16. Now of the land about which this account has been begun, no one knows precisely what lies beyond it: for I am not able to hear of any one who alleges that he knows as an eye-witness; and even Aristeas, the man of whom I was making mention just now, even he, I say, did not allege, although he was composing verse, that he went further than the Issedonians; but that which is beyond them he spoke of by hearsay, and reported that it was the Issedonians who said these things. So far however as we were able to arrive at certainty by hearsay, carrying inquiries as far as possible, all this shall be told.

17. Beginning with the trading station of the Borysthenites,--for of the parts along the sea this is the central point of all Scythia,--beginning with this, the first regions are occupied by the Callipidai, who are Hellenic Scythians; and above these is another race, who are

called Alazonians. These last and the Callipidai in all other respects have the same customs as the Scythians, but they both sow corn and use it as food, and also onions, leeks, lentils and millet. Above the Alazonians dwell Scythians who till the ground, and these sow their corn not for food but to sell. Beyond them dwell the Neuroi; and beyond the Neuroi towards the North Wind is a region without inhabitants, as far as we know. These races are along the river Hypanis to the West of the Borysthenes; but after crossing the Borysthenes, first from the sea-coast is Hylaia, and beyond this as one goes up the river dwell agricultural Scythians, whom the Hellenes who live upon the river Hypanis call Borysthenites, calling themselves at the same time citizens of Olbia. These agricultural Scythians occupy the region which extends Eastwards for a distance of three days' journey, reaching to a river which is called Panticapes, and Northwards for a distance of eleven days' sail up the Borysthenes. Then immediately beyond these begins the desert and extends for a great distance; and on the other side of the desert dwell the Androphagoi, a race apart by themselves and having no connection with the Scythians. Beyond them begins a region which is really desert and has no race of men in it, as far as we know. 19. The region which lies to the East of these agricultural Scythians, after one has crossed the river Panticapes, is occupied by nomad Scythians, who neither sow anything nor plough the earth; and this whole region is bare of trees except Hylaia. These nomads occupy a country which extends to the river Gerros, a distance of fourteen days' journey Eastwards. 20. Then on the other side of the Gerros we have those parts which are called the "Royal" lands and those Scythians who are the bravest and most numerous and who esteem the other Scythians their slaves. These reach Southwards to the Tauric land, and Eastwards to the trench which those who were begotten of the blind slaves dug, and to the trading station which is called Cremnoi upon the Maiotian lake; and some parts of their country reach to the river Tanaïs. Beyond the Royal Scythians towards the North Wind dwell the Melanchlainoi, of a different race and not Scythian. The region beyond the Melanchlainoi is marshy and not inhabited by any, so far as we know.

21. After one has crossed the river Tanaïs the country is no longer Scythia, but the first of the divisions belongs to the Sauromatai, who beginning at the corner of the Maiotian lake occupy land extending

towards the North Wind fifteen days' journey, and wholly bare of trees both cultivated and wild. Above these, holding the next division of land, dwell the Budinoi, who occupy a land wholly overgrown with forest consisting of all kinds of trees. 22. Then beyond the Budinoi towards the North, first there is desert for seven days' journey; and after the desert turning aside somewhat more towards the East Wind we come to land occupied by the Thyssagetai, a numerous people and of separate race from the others. These live by hunting; and bordering upon them there are settled also in these same regions men who are called Irycai, who also live by hunting, which they practise in the following manner:--the hunter climbs up a tree and lies in wait there for his game (now trees are abundant in all this country), and each has a horse at hand, which has been taught to lie down upon its belly in order that it may make itself low, and also a dog: and when he sees the wild animal from the tree, he first shoots his arrow and then mounts upon his horse and pursues it, and the dog seizes hold of it. Above these in a direction towards the East dwell other Scythians, who have revolted from the Royal Scythians and so have come to this region.

23. As far as the country of these Scythians the whole land which has been described is level plain and has a deep soil; but after this point it is stony and rugged. Then when one has passed through a great extent of this rugged country, there dwell in the skirts of lofty mountains men who are said to be all bald-headed from their birth, male and female equally, and who have flat noses and large chins and speak a language of their own, using the Scythian manner of dress, and living on the produce of trees. The tree on the fruit of which they live is called the Pontic tree, and it is about the size of a fig-tree: this bears a fruit the size of a bean, containing a stone. When the fruit has ripened, they strain it through cloths and there flows from it a thick black juice, and this juice which flows from it is called /as-chy/. This they either lick up or drink mixed with milk, and from its lees, that is the solid part, they make cakes and use them for food; for they have not many cattle, since the pastures there are by no means good. Each man has his dwelling under a tree, in winter covering the tree all round with close white felt-cloth, and in summer without it. These are injured by no men, for they are said to be sacred, and they possess no weapon of war. These are they also who decide the disputes rising among their neighbours; and besides this,

whatever fugitive takes refuge with them is injured by no one: and they are called Argippaians.

24. Now as far as these bald-headed men there is abundantly clear information about the land and about the nations on this side of them; for not only do certain of the Scythians go to them, from whom it is not difficult to get information, but also some of the Hellenes who are at the trading-station of the Borysthenes and the other trading-places of the Pontic coast: and those of the Scythians who go to them transact their business through seven interpreters and in seven different languages. 25. So far as these, I say, the land is known; but concerning the region to the North of the bald-headed men no one can speak with certainty, for lofty and impassable mountains divide it off, and no one passes over them. However these bald-headed men say (though I do not believe it) that the mountains are inhabited by men with goats' feet; and that after one has passed beyond these, others are found who sleep through six months of the year. This I do not admit at all as true. However, the country to the East of the bald-headed men is known with certainty, being inhabited by the Issedonians, but that which lies beyond both the bald-headed men and the Issedonians towards the North Wind is unknown, except so far as we know it from the accounts given by these nations which have just been mentioned. 26. The Issedonians are said to have these customs:--when a man's father is dead, all the relations bring cattle to the house, and then having slain them and cut up the flesh, they cut up also the dead body of the father of their entertainer, and mixing all the flesh together they set forth a banquet. His skull however they strip of the flesh and clean it out and then gild it over, and after that they deal with it as a sacred thing and perform for the dead man great sacrifices every year. This each son does for his father, just as the Hellenes keep the day of memorial for the dead. In other respects however this race also is said to live righteously, and their women have equal rights with the men. 27. These then also are known; but as to the region beyond them, it is the Issedonians who report that there are there one-eyed men and gold-guarding griffins; and the Scythians report this having received it from them, and from the Scythians we, that is the rest of mankind, have got our belief; and we call them in Scythian language Arimaspians, for the Scythians call the number one /arima/ and the eye /spu/.

28. This whole land which has been described is so exceedingly severe in climate, that for eight months of the year there is frost so hard as to be intolerable; and during these if you pour out water you will not be able to make mud, but only if you kindle a fire can you make it; and the sea is frozen and the whole of the Kimmerian Bosphorus, so that the Scythians who are settled within the trench make expeditions and drive their waggons over into the country of the Sindians. Thus it continues to be winter for eight months, and even for the remaining four it is cold in those parts. This winter is distinguished in its character from all the winters which come in other parts of the world; for in it there is no rain to speak of at the usual season for rain, whereas in summer it rains continually; and thunder does not come at the time when it comes in other countries, but is very frequent, in the summer; and if thunder comes in winter, it is marvelled at as a prodigy: just so, if an earthquake happens, whether in summer or in winter, it is accounted a prodigy in Scythia. Horses are able to endure this winter, but neither mules nor asses can endure it at all, whereas in other countries horses if they stand in frost lose their limbs by mortification, while asses and mules endure it. 29. I think also that it is for this reason that the hornless breed of oxen in that country have no horns growing; and there is a verse of Homer in the Odyssey supporting my opinion, which runs this:--

"Also the Libyan land, where the sheep very quickly grow hornèd,"

for it is rightly said that in hot regions the horns come quickly, whereas in extreme cold the animals either have no horns growing at all, or hardly any.

30. In that land then this takes place on account of the cold; but (since my history proceeded from the first seeking occasions for digression) I feel wonder that in the whole land of Elis mules cannot be bred, though that region is not cold, nor is there any other evident cause. The Eleians themselves say that in consequence of some curse mules are not begotten in their land; but when the time approaches for the mares to conceive, they drive them out into the neighbouring lands and there in the land of their neighbours they admit to them the he-asses until the mares are pregnant, and then they drive them back.

31. As to the feathers of which the Scythians say that the air is full, and that by reason of them they are not able either to see or to pass through the further parts of the continent, the opinion which I have is this:--in the parts beyond this land it snows continually, though less in summer than in winter, as might be supposed. Now whomsoever has seen close at hand snow falling thickly, knows what I mean without further explanation, for the snow is like feathers: and on account of this wintry weather, being such as I have said, the Northern parts of this continent are uninhabitable. I think therefore that by the feathers the Scythians and those who dwell near them mean symbolically the snow. This then which has been said goes to the furthest extent of the accounts given.

32. About a Hyperborean people the Scythians report nothing, nor do any of those who dwell in this region, unless it be the Issedonians: but in my opinion neither do these report anything; for if they did the Scythians also would report it, as they do about the one-eyed people. Hesiod however has spoken of Hyperboreans, and so also has Homer in the poem of the "Epigonoï," at least if Homer was really the composer of that Epic. 33. But much more about them is reported by the people of Delos than by any others. For these say that sacred offerings bound up in wheat straw are carried from the land of the Hyperboreans and come to the Scythians, and then from the Scythians the neighbouring nations in succession receive them and convey them Westwards, finally as far as the Adriatic: thence they are sent forward towards the South, and the people of Dodona receive them first of all the Hellenes, and from these they come down to the Malian gulf and are passed over to Eubœa, where city sends them on to city till they come to Carystos. After this Andros is left out, for the Carystians are those who bring them to Tenos, and the Tenians to Delos. Thus they say that these sacred offerings come to Delos; but at first, they say, the Hyperboreans sent two maidens bearing the sacred offerings, whose names, say the Delians, were Hyperoche and Laodike, and with them for their protection the Hyperboreans sent five men of their nation to attend them, those namely who are now called /Perphereës/ and have great honours paid to them in Delos. Since however the Hyperboreans found that those who were sent away did not return back, they were troubled to think that it would always befall them to send out and not to receive back; and so they bore the offerings to the borders of their land bound up in wheat straw, and

laid a charge upon their neighbours, bidding them send these forward from themselves to another nation. These things then, they say, come to Delos being thus sent forward; and I know of my own knowledge that a thing is done which has resemblance to these offerings, namely that the women of Thrace and Paionia, when they sacrifice to Artemis "the Queen," do not make their offerings without wheat straw. 34. These I know do as I have said; and for those maidens from the Hyperboreans, who died in Delos, both the girls and the boys of the Delians cut off their hair: the former before marriage cut off a lock and having wound it round a spindle lay it upon the tomb (now the tomb is on the left hand as one goes into the temple of Artemis, and over it grows an olive-tree), and all the boys of the Delians wind some of their hair about a green shoot of some tree, and they also place it upon the tomb. 35. The maidens, I say, have this honour paid them by the dwellers in Delos: and the same people say that Arge and Opis also, being maidens, came to Delos, passing from the Hyperboreans by the same nations which have been mentioned, even before Hyperoche and Laodike. These last, they say, came bearing for Eileithuia the tribute which they had laid upon themselves for the speedy birth, but Arge and Opis came with the divinities themselves, and other honours have been assigned to them by the people of Delos: for the women, they say, collect for them, naming them by their names in the hymn which Olen a man of Lykia composed in their honour; and both the natives of the other islands and the Ionians have learnt from them to sing hymns naming Opis and Arge and collecting:--now this Olen came from Lukia and composed also the other ancient hymns which are sung in Delos:--and moreover they say that when the thighs of the victim are consumed upon the altar, the ashes of them are used to cast upon the grave of Opis and Arge. Now their grave is behind the temple of Artemis, turned towards the East, close to the banqueting hall of the Keïeans.

36. Let this suffice which has been said of the Hyperboreans; for the tale of Abaris, who is reported to have been a Hyperborean, I do not tell, namely how he carried the arrow about all over the earth, eating no food. If however there are any Hyperboreans, it follows that there are also Hypernotians; and I laugh when I see that, though many before this have drawn maps of the Earth, yet no one has set the matter forth in an intelligent way; seeing that they draw Ocean flowing round the Earth, which is circular exactly as if drawn with compasses, and they make Asia equal in size to Europe. In a few words

I shall declare the size of each division and of what nature it is as regards outline.

37. The Persians inhabit Asia extending to the Southern Sea, which is called the Erythraian; and above these towards the North Wind dwell the Medes, and above the Medes the Saspeirians, and above the Saspeirians the Colchians, extending to the Northern Sea, into which the river Phasis runs. These four nations inhabit from sea to sea. 38. From them Westwards two peninsulas stretch out from Asia into the sea, and these I will describe. The first peninsula on the one of its sides, that is the Northern, stretches along beginning from the Phasis and extending to the sea, going along the Pontus and the Hellespont as far as Sigeion in the land of Troy; and on the Southern side the same peninsula stretches from the Myriandrian gulf, which lies near Phenicia, in the direction of the sea as far as the headland Triopion; and in this peninsula dwell thirty races of men. 39. This then is one of the peninsulas, and the other beginning from the land of the Persians stretches along to the Erythraian Sea, including Persia and next after it Assyria, and Arabia after Assyria: and this ends, or rather is commonly supposed to end, at the Arabian gulf, into which Darius conducted a channel from the Nile. Now in the line stretching to Phenicia from the land of the Persians the land is broad and the space abundant, but after Phenicia this peninsula goes by the shore of our Sea along Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, where it ends; and in it there are three nations only. 40. These are the parts of Asia which tend towards the West from the Persian land; but as to those which lie beyond the Persians and Medes and Saspeirians and Colchians towards the East and the sunrising, on one side the Erythraian Sea runs along by them, and on the North both the Caspian Sea and the river Araxes, which flows towards the rising sun: and Asia is inhabited as far as the Indian land; but from this onwards towards the East it becomes desert, nor can any one say what manner of land it is.

41. Such and so large is Asia: and Libya is included in the second peninsula; for after Egypt Libya succeeds at once. Now about Egypt this peninsula is narrow, for from our Sea to the Erythraian Sea is a distance there of ten myriads of fathoms, which would amount to a thousand furlongs; but after this narrow part, the portion of the peninsula which is called Libya is, as it chances, extremely broad.

42. I wonder then at those who have parted off and divided the world into Libya, Asia, and Europe, since the difference between these is not small; for in length Europe extends along by both, while in breadth it is clear to me that it is beyond comparison larger; for Libya furnishes proofs about itself that it is surrounded by sea, except so much of it as borders upon Asia; and this fact was shown by Necos king of the Egyptians first of all those about whom we have knowledge. He when he had ceased digging the channel which goes through from the Nile to the Arabian gulf, sent Phoenicians with ships, bidding them sail and come back through the Pillars of Heracles to the Northern Sea and so to Egypt. The Phoenicians therefore set forth from the Erythraian Sea and sailed through the Southern Sea; and when autumn came, they would put to shore and sow the land, wherever in Libya they might happen to be as they sailed, and then they waited for the harvest: and having reaped the corn they would sail on, so that after two years had elapsed, in the third year they turned through the Pillars of Heracles and arrived again in Egypt. And they reported a thing which I cannot believe, but another man may, namely that in sailing round Libya they had the sun on their right hand. 43. Thus was this country first known to be what it is, and after this it is the Carthaginians who make report of it; for as to Sataspes the son of Teaspis the Achaimenid, he did not sail round Libya, though he was sent for this very purpose, but was struck with fear by the length of the voyage and the desolate nature of the land, and so returned back and did not accomplish the task which his mother laid upon him. For this man had outraged a daughter of Zopyros the son of Megabyzos, a virgin; and then when he was about to be impaled by order of king Xerxes for this offence, the mother of Sataspes, who was a sister of Darius, entreated for his life, saying that she would herself lay upon him a greater penalty than Xerxes; for he should be compelled (she said) to sail round Libya, until in sailing round it he came to the Arabian gulf. So then Xerxes having agreed upon these terms, Sataspes went to Egypt, and obtaining a ship and sailors from the Egyptians, he sailed to the Pillars of Heracles; and having sailed through them and turned the point of Libya which is called the promontory of Soloeis, he sailed on towards the South. Then after he had passed over much sea in many months, as there was needed ever more and more voyaging, he turned about and sailed back again to Egypt: and having come from thence into the presence of king Xerxes, he reported saying that at the furthest point which he reached he was sailing by

dwarfish people, who used clothing made from the palm-tree, and who, whenever they came to land with their ship, left their towns and fled away to the mountains: and they, he said, did no injury when they entered into the towns, but took food from them only. And the cause, he said, why he had not completely sailed round Libya was that the ship could not advance any further but stuck fast. Xerxes however did not believe that he was speaking the truth, and since he had not performed the appointed task, he impaled him, inflicting upon him the penalty pronounced before. A eunuch belonging to this Sataspes ran away to Samos as soon as he heard that his master was dead, carrying with him large sums of money; and of this a man of Samos took possession, whose name I know, but I purposely pass it over without mention.

44. Of Asia the greater part was explored by Darius, who desiring to know of the river Indus, which is a second river producing crocodiles of all the rivers in the world,--to know, I say, of this river where it runs out into the sea, sent with ships, besides others whom he trusted to speak the truth, Skylax also, a man of Caryanda. These starting from the city of Caspatyros and the land of Pactyike, sailed down the river towards the East and the sunrising to the sea; and then sailing over the sea Westwards they came in the thirtieth month to that place from whence the king of the Egyptians had sent out the Phoenicians of whom I spoke before, to sail round Libya. After these had made their voyage round the coast, Darius both subdued the Indians and made use of this sea. Thus Asia also, excepting the parts of it which are towards the rising sun, has been found to be similar to Libya. 45. As to Europe, however, it is clearly not known by any, either as regards the parts which are towards the rising sun or those towards the North, whether it be surrounded by sea: but in length it is known to stretch along by both the other divisions. And I am not able to understand for what reason it is that to the Earth, which is one, three different names are given derived from women, and why there were set as boundaries to divide it the river Nile of Egypt and the Phasis in Colchis (or as some say the Maiotian river Tanais and the Kimmerian ferry); nor can I learn who those persons were who made the boundaries, or for what reason they gave the names. Libya indeed is said by most of the Hellenes to have its name from Libya a woman of that country, and Asia from the wife of Prometheus: but this last name is claimed by the Lydians, who say that

Asia has been called after Asias the son of Cotys the son of Manes, and not from Asia the wife of Prometheus; and from him too they say the Asian tribe in Sardis has its name. As to Europe however, it is neither known by any man whether it is surrounded by sea, nor does it appear whence it got this name or who he was who gave it, unless we shall say that the land received its name from Europa the Tyrian; and if so, it would appear that before this it was nameless like the rest. She however evidently belongs to Asia and did not come to this land which is now called by the Hellenes Europe, but only from Phenicia to Crete, and from Crete to Lykia. Let this suffice now which has been said about these matters; for we will adopt those which are commonly accepted of the accounts.

Source: <http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.html>