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MEDEA (Μηδείη, ἡ)

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Enchantress in Greek mythology, granddaughter of the sun god HELIOS and daughter of the king of the COLCHIANS, Aeëtes (Hes. *Theog*. 956–62, 992–1002; Pind. *Pyth*. 4). Medea assisted JASON in his mission to retrieve the Golden Fleece and later in contriving to exact VENGEANCE on Pelias for his refusal to honor his pact with Jason.

Euripides' TRAGEDY *Medea*, produced in 431 BCE, is set in CORINTH, where Jason and Medea have fled after Medea's MURDER of Pelias. This version sees Medea murder her two sons, and Jason's bride, in revenge for Jason's actions in abandoning her and marrying the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth.

Herodotus includes Medea's departure from Colchis with the Argonauts among his description of the reciprocal abductions of women in the PROLOGUE of his work (1.2.2–3) and suggests that the kidnapping of HELEN (which he implies took place two generations later) by ALEXANDER (Paris) was defended by the Trojans with reference to the Greeks' abduction of Medea (1.3.2). He later suggests (7.62.1) that Medea went from ATHENS to the land of the MEDES and gave her name to them.

SEE ALSO: Argo; Myth; Rape; Reciprocity; Women in the *Histories*

FURTHER READING

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MEDES (Μῆδοι, οἱ)

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An Iranian people, closely related to the Persians, who are described in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform texts of the mid-ninth to the mid-seventh centuries BCE as being among the main population groups established in the central-western Zagros region of western Iran. In Herodotus' *Histories* (and seemingly also in the *PERSICA* of CTESIAS, *FGrHist* 688 F5.4), the Medes are depicted as the successors to the power of the ASSYRIANS and as the immediate imperial predecessors of Achaemenid PERSIA.

The Medes left no written accounts of their history. Present knowledge about them is drawn from Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian documents, the testimony of Herodotus (as well as sporadic references in other Greek authors), ACHAEMENID inscriptions, and references in the Bible. (For a full review of these various sources, see Diakonoff 1985.) Insights into their material culture hinge primarily on a small number of excavated settlements that have been attributed to them in the Hamadan (ancient ECBATANA), Kangavar, and Malayer regions, i.e., in the "Median Triangle" of northern Iran (see, comprehensively, Stronach in Lanfranchi et al. 2003). Their artistic production is subject to much controversy (Muscarella 1987).

The so-called Median *LOGOS* of Herodotus (1.95–130) is the only extant connected account of the early history of the Medes until their CONQUEST by CYRUS (II) and the Persians. As it recounts, the Medes were previously divided into village-dwelling tribes (the BUSAE, PARETACENIANS, STRUCHATES, ARIZANTIANS, BUDIANS, and MAGI, 1.101.1) and were vassals for a time of the Assyrians, who had ruled Upper ASIA (east of the river HALYS) for 520 years, but they were eventually able to liberate themselves from the Assyrian yoke. They were subsequently united under a single ruler in the person of a certain DEIOCES son of PHRAORTES, who succeeded in attaining monarchic power owing to his wisdom and commitment to justice. According to Herodotus, Deioces was responsible for the creation of a Median institution of kingship, made manifest by the construction, at his command, of a single center of power at Ecbatana and his introduction of a court protocol and retinues of royal guards and spies. Having reigned for 53 years, Deioces was succeeded on the throne by his son, PHRAORTES, who brought the Persians and other (unnamed) peoples under Median sway

and perished, following a reign of 22 years, in a campaign against the Assyrians. His son and successor, CYAXARES, reigned for 40 years; he fought against the Lydians (see also 1.74, the battle of the ECLIPSE of 585 BCE) and renewed his father's attacks against the Assyrians. A first attempt to capture NINEVEH is said to have been interrupted by the sudden appearance of a Scythian army led by King MADYES, son of PROTOTHYES, who had invaded and conquered Median territory in pursuit of fleeing CIMMERIANS (cf. 4.1 and 4.4). Following a Scythian interregnum of 28 years, Cyaxares was able to oust the SCYTHIANS, capture Nineveh, and place all of Assyria under Median rule, except for the former Assyrian province of Babylonia. Following the 35-year reign of his son, ASTYAGES, Median supremacy over Upper Asia passed to the Persians in the wake of Cyrus' victory over Astyages, who is depicted in Herodotus' account as Cyrus' maternal grandfather. According to Herodotus' report (1.130.1), the Medes were masters of Upper Asia for a total of 128 years (see especially Scurlock 1990). Counting backwards from the date of Cyrus' victory over Astyages in c. 550 (a date derived from the Babylonian Chronicle), the time-spans of the Median reigns recorded by Herodotus would suggest that the unification of the Medes into a single kingdom took place in the final years of the eighth or the first quarter of the seventh century.

Modern scholars have long recognized the dubious value of the Median *logos* as a document for early Median history and the history of the region in general during the first half of the first millennium BCE. Not discounting the important place of the Medes in the Near Eastern tradition, the expansive Herodotean notion of a virtual Median supremacy over the territories of Upper Asia formerly ruled by the Assyrians "except for the province of Babylonia" misrepresents, most notably, the reality of a powerful Neo-Babylonian kingdom that controlled extensive central and western stretches of the former Assyrian Empire until the first decade of the reign of Cyrus (cf. 1.178–91, 1.74.3). The details of the Median dynastic history recorded by Herodotus are equally short of finding complete corroboration in the Near Eastern record. The Babylonian Chronicle (Grayson 1975, 106, no. 7, ii, ll. 1–4) refers to the defeat of the Median king Ištumegu (Astyages) and capture of his royal capital, *Agamtanu* (Ecbatana), by Cyrus, setting the event to about 550. The so-called Nabopolassar Chronicle (Grayson 1975, 90–96, no. 3, ll. 29ff.), relating the fall of Nineveh and the collapse of Assyria, refers to a campaign of Umakištar (Cyaxares) at the head of a Median coalition against the Assyrian heartland in 615 or 614, and to this same Median king's capture, albeit jointly with the Babylonians, of Nineveh in 612; it alternately refers to Umakištar as "king of the *Ummānmanda*" (an archaizing Akkadian designation for barbarians from the Zagros) and as the king of the Medes. Earlier proposed identifications of the first two members of Herodotus' Median royal line with historical personalities active in the Zagros region in the late eighth and the seventh century, respectively, do not withstand scrutiny (Helm 1981). The Daiukku (Deioces) attested in inscriptions of Sargon II (r. 721–705) was a "governor (*šaknu*) of the Manneans," a central Zagros ethnic group that the Assyrians at the time consistently distinguished from the Medes. The identification of Phraortes with Kaštaritu, a city-lord of Kar Kašši (or "Trading port of the Kassites") in the Zagros, who is mentioned in a number of omen texts of Esarhaddon (r. 680–669), equally carries little conviction. Beyond the Herodotean account there is no evidence, either, for a Scythian rule over the Medes, even if the activities of a Scythian ruler Bartatua (Protothyes) are mentioned in seventh-century Mesopotamian texts (Ivantchik 1993, 205–9).

Other cuneiform testimony belies the implication, which is central to the Herodotean account, of a unified Median political entity that came into existence by the early seventh century. Records of Neo-Assyrian incursions into northwestern Iran as far as *Mt. Bikni* (presently variously identified with Mt. Alvand or Mt. Damāvand) and dealings with the Zagros peoples supply a number of references to the Medes as a diversified group of mountain dwellers, riders of HORSES, breeders of CATTLE, "mighty Medes," "distant Medes," or "Arabs of the East" (i.e., a people who specialized in DESERT trade with CAMELS settled along the Great Khorasan Road: Levine 1974; Radner in Lanfranchi et al. 2003).

These records, spanning the mid-ninth to mid-seventh centuries, simultaneously testify to a contemporary Median presence that appears to have consisted, for an indeterminate period of time, of several, separate principalities, each centered around a fortified settlement, encompassing a number of smaller communities, and ruled by a *bēl ālī* or "city lord" (a title used in Assyrian texts for rulers of mountain regions to the east).

According to current hypotheses, the unification of the Medes, which is first implied in the cuneiform record with reference to the assaults of Cyaxares against Assyria from c. 615 onward, would have been a complex process entailing a gradual iranization of the different ethnic groups that inhabited the Zagros region (Young 1988, 6–23). It could constitute an instance of secondary state formation (that is to say, a process of economic intensification and social stratification) that was triggered by the political, military, and economic intrusions of the Assyrians in northwestern Iran (Brown 1988) or that was, perhaps, enhanced by Median "robber barons" acquiring WEALTH through exploitation of local and long distance TRADE (Radner in Lanfranchi et al. 2003, 52). Or the rise of a single leader among the Medes could have been occasioned by disturbances in the Zagros for which evidence is supplied by Assyrian texts (Tuplin 2004, 233).

The course of a unified Median political existence before the Persian conquest cannot be charted in any definitive manner (see relevant papers in Lanfranchi et al. 2003). Herodotus' references to Cyaxares and the Medes' conflict with LYDIA testify to a westward reach of Median power as far as inner Anatolia. Allusions to a pre-Achaemenid Median sphere of political influence that encompassed ARMENIA, CAPPADOCIA, and possibly BACTRIA are further discernible in the BISITUN inscription (DB §§26–30, 34; cf. Vogelsang 1992, 110–12). Additional indications of a prominent Median presence in the territories east of the Halys before the emergence of Persia as a world power might be inferred from Greek and biblical references to the Persians as Medes (Tuplin 1994). But textual clues to the historical reality of an extended Median territorial state find so far uncertain support from ARCHAEOLOGY. In the Median heartland, archaeological layers of the capital center of Ecbatana—where one would mostly expect to find traces of political centralization and imperial administration—are not yet in evidence. (For potential evidence in the wider Hamadan-Kangavar-Malayer region and Tell Gubba see Roaf 2008; Stronach 2012.) The silence of the archaeological record may be interpreted as an additional indication of an exaggeration of the role of the Medes in Herodotus' account. Or it could imply that normative expressions of "empire," as defined among others by the practices of the Assyrians and the Persians, did not apply in the case of the Medes (cf. Tuplin 2004).

The uncertainties and incongruities that surround the evidence for the history of the Medes have led over the years to a morass of conflicting speculations about the origins of Herodotus' information and the methods that he employed to compile his Median *logos*. The basic agreement of his references to Cyaxares and Astyages with the Babylonian testimony was taken to indicate that the Greek historian's account was derived in part from details that were available in Babylonian archival sources (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988).

For other scholars the entire composition could reflect, more than anything else, Greek, or possibly Herodotean, historical thought. The process of Deioces' rise to power, and the designation of this power as *tyrannis*, were compared to the Greek "Tyrant progress," and the alleged transfer of the focus of Median political organization from the numerous earlier smaller settlements to a single capital center (1.98.3) with a Greek model of state formation (*synoikismos*) (e.g., How and Wells 1912, 1: 104). Herodotus was further assumed to have fashioned the worldly trappings of Deioces' kingship based on contemporary Achaemenid imperial practices that were known to him (Briant 2002, 26).

The depiction of the history of (Upper) Asia as a succession of three kingdoms—Assyrian, Median, Persian—and its allied chronological scheme have been taken to reflect an Ionian or Herodotean ecumenical view of history (respectively, Asheri in ALC, 148–49; Wiesehöfer in Lanfranchi et al. 2003, 393, 396). The chronological scheme making the Assyrians the beginning of the history of Asia would have resulted from early Greek chronographers' attempts to correlate Near Eastern with Greek history (Drews 1969).

More recent research supports the indebtedness of the Median *logos* to a Persian imperialist perspective concerned above all with legitimating Cyrus and the Persians' accession to the throne of Media and the former Mesopotamian Asiatic rule (Zournatzi 2013)—in neither of which realms was Cyrus a natural successor. Repeated evocations of the theme of sovereignty (as *ARCHĒ*, *tyrannis*, *basilēiē,* and *hēgemoniē*) and the representation of a "seamless" linear succession of kingdoms from Assyrian times until the enthronement of Cyrus convey Persia's legitimate inheritance of the former Assyrian imperial legacy (cf. Metzler 1975, 444–46), in keeping with an already ancient Near Eastern perception of a single-line transmission of a unique heavenly (i.e., legitimate) kingship. The iranocentric interpretation of this age-old concept of legitimate rule in the Median *logos* is betrayed by the conspicuous lack of references to the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, and the simultaneous portrayal of the transition from the Assyrian to the Persian rule of Asia exclusively in terms of Iranian (Median and Scythian) political visibility.

Sustained preoccupation with the right to rule also accounts for the various details describing the circumstances of Deioces' rise to monarchic power. Rather than a document of the process of Median state formation, they could adduce instead complementary moral and ritual credentials in support of the claim of a new Iranian—ostensibly Median but, ultimately, Persian—order to the Assyrian imperial inheritance. Singled out as the key driving motives for Median political unification, Deioces' personal merits of wisdom and commitment to justice (1.96–97, 100)—both notions germane to the ancient Iranian worldview—simultaneously appeal to Near Eastern formulations of the mental and moral makeup of legitimate kingship, and find their closest parallels in the legitimation rhetoric of DARIUS I (esp. DNb §§1–3). The construction of a splendid capital to serve as Deioces' seat of rule, and the introduction of a retinue of guards and spies and a royal ceremonial, were features integral to a Mesopotamian outlook of kingship that was associated in the first millennium with the Assyrian imperial legacy and emulated by Assyria's heirs, including the Persians. In short, the account of Median history transmitted by Herodotus may be seen to speak primarily for the need to justify Persian imperial authority and the impact of Persian imperial rhetoric on Herodotus' treatment of the Near East. For objective information about the history of the Medes, one is still largely dependent on the testimony of the cuneiform record and the progress of Median archaeology.

SEE ALSO: Babylon; Chronology; Mandane; Monarchy; Near Eastern History; Sources for Herodotus; Tyrants

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MEDICAL WRITERS

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Herodotus' relation to the early Greek medical writers is important and complex. While the Presocratic Alcmaeon (DK 24) had medical theories, as did certain SOPHISTS, most relevant material lies in the earlier essays of the Hippocratic corpus. These are either by Hippocrates himself, or by others in his school: much earlier scholarship was preoccupied with authenticity, but more recent scholarship now accepts that while some are not by Hippocrates (since basic theories and style diverge), all are important parts of the story of medical thought. The earliest essays, dating to the late fifth century BCE, seem to be these: *Epidemics I* and *III*; *Airs, Waters, Places*; *On the Art*; *On Ancient Medicine (VM)*; *On the Sacred Disease*; *Breaths* (περὶ φυσῶν); *On Generation; Nature of the Child; Maladies IV*; *On Regimen in Acute Diseases*; and *On the Nature of Man*, the first clear exposition of the theory of humors (for other possible fifth-century essays, see Craik 2015).

They offer a wider range of methodological responses to the questions of health and the nature of human beings. Much of the method is philosophical and logical rather than reliant on observation and empirical EVIDENCE: this is characteristic of early medical thought and makes it hard—and undesirable—to try to separate the two disciplines too rigidly. Some are overtly rhetorical display pieces, using the newest tricks of argument and PROOF (e.g., *On the Art*); yet *Epidemics I* and *III*, the earliest of the essays entitled *Epidemics*, go through lengthy lists of patients' symptoms day-by-day, structured by a set of beliefs about health and illness, and this initiated the empirical tradition in the study of MEDICINE. The interrelation of observation, theory, logic, and cultural assumptions about humans makes these works a particularly fascinating way into Greek mentality and certain intellectual attempts to understand the human being.

Herodotus' *Histories* have the closest and most obvious relationship to *Airs, Waters, Places*, which offered a grand theory about the relation of human health to CLIMATE and WEATHER ("Airs"), water, and place. It went on to offer an overarching theory about the inhabitants of EUROPE, ASIA, and LIBYA (i.e., North Africa), and their relative strength and vitality, using the binary division of the hot/cold and wet/dry. The focus on Scythia, EGYPT, and Libya forms a striking point of comparison to Herodotus. Some scholars have sought to see *Airs* as a source for Herodotus, but it offers a fundamentally more physiological analysis of the SCYTHIANS (inhabitants of the Ukraine and Steppes) than Herodotus did, and it is more plausible to see the two authors as inhabiting and partaking of the same intellectual world, both sharing some interests and methods, but making their own way. When Herodotus elaborated at length on the peoples and GEOGRAPHY of Libya, Scythia, and at most length Egypt, he echoed the interests of certain medical writers who saw these far regions as examples of EXTREMES, but he devoted more attention and personal experience to his descriptions. Thus in *Airs* (21–22), the Scythians are extreme examples of the cold and the wet, which permeates their constitution and promoted infertility and even the "female disease" which was a combined result of climate and horse-riding; but for Herodotus, the "female disease" had other