

Ippokratis Kantzios - December 1st, 1996

Herodotus and the Ends of the World

Herodotus, born ca. 490 BC in

which the historian and his audience perceive and understand the world. A Greek can accept this co-existence of two opposites only as a very rare exception.

Arabian stories probably reach the historian through the Phoenicians, with some influences perhaps from Egypt. Remember that the Phoenicians were merchants, and that an exaggeration of the dangers involved in procuring their products would increase their value. This may help us understand the persistence of certain themes and images like snakes, winged guardians, unknown places, and the like.

Of Ethiopia, west of Arabia, Herodotus gives a compact description: "this country produces great quantities of gold, has an abundance of elephants and all the woodland trees, and ebony; and its men are the tallest, the most handsome, and the longest lived." Homer, in the beginning of the *Odyssey*, had mentioned Zeus' feasting with the "blameless" Ethiopians, a poetic tradition which may have encouraged Herodotus to place in their

Herodotus' mentions the peoples who live successively north and west of known peoples, until he reaches

the sailors decide to rob him and do away with him. Arion pleads for his life unsuccessfully, but he