

# Echoes from the Greek Bronze Age



Echoes from the Greek Bronze Age:  
An Anthology of Greek Thought  
in the Classical Age

By

Robert D. Morritt

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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-2489-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2489-7

Sincere appreciation is conveyed here to the Editorial Staff  
of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

I cannot express more highly my gratitude to the following  
for the care they took to bring this book to fruition.

My special thanks are extended to;  
Dr. Andy Nercessian, Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar  
and Soucin Yip-Sou.

Thank you for making this a comfortable transition  
through all stages of production.



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# FOREWORD

Over the years I had accumulated much archaeological information on the Classical era together with many notes on the individuals and their thoughts and works.

I decided to make a ‘compendium’ of information on the individuals rather than make this into an archeological treatise which would have been too large a scope and would detract from concentrating on the early works of these archaic literary individuals.

Biographical information is included together with excerpts from their works of selected Classical thinkers are included with their views on Life, the Gods, History (including nautical battles) Myths, Odes and scientific theories.

## Highlights

Simonides ‘Art of Memory’ – the Loci – Dwells on the use of visual objects, how to retain them mentally as an aid to improve concentration. The proponent of this art was the hermetic *Giordano Bruno*, [1] (1548-1600.) a Dominican monk who left the convent and wandered throughout Europe relating the secrets of the Art to all who would listen to him including the King of France Giordano he was *burned at the stake for heresy in 1600*

Hecataeus, his survey of the ‘then known’ world, author of *Periodos gēs* “Survey of the Earth”.

Xenophanes, gives an account of fossils “shells are found in the midst of the land and among the mountains, that *the quarries of Syracuse the imprints of a fish and of seals had been found.*”

He was the forerunner of the art later introduced, of dating objects by stratification in geological deposits.

Anaxagoras ponders “Earth is condensed out of these things that are separated. For water is separated from the clouds, and earth from the water.”

Xenophon; *Hellenica*, presents vivid descriptions of battle; ‘The Athenians, finding themselves besieged by land and sea, were in sore perplexity what to do.’

Without ships, without allies, without provisions, the belief gained hold upon them that there was no way of escape. They must now, in their turn, suffer what they had themselves inflicted upon others;

Xenophanes; His ‘sayings’, as evidenced in the following quotation, “When Empedokles said to him (Xenophanes) that the wise man was not to be found, he answered: Naturally, for it would take a wise man to recognise a wise man.”

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was brought to fruition by the kind assistance of Carol Koulikourdi and Amanda Millar of Cambridge Scholars Publishing. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with them.



## HECATEUS OF MILETUS

Hecataeus was a native of Miletus in Asia Minor, a Greek geographer, historian cartographer who designed a map of the world and author of a geographical survey of the regions and the peoples in the Achaemenid Empire.

Considered to be the most influential of the early Ionian prose writers (Herodotus 5.36, called him a *logopoios* “prose writer”)

Hecataeus was the son of Hegesandros and belonged to the old nobility of Miletus.

Due to his role as an adviser in the early days of the Ionian revolt (fall of 499 B.C.E.) against Persian domination, it is generally assumed that he was born before 545 B.C.E.

When the circles around Aristagoras (q.v.), the tyrant of Miletus, showed determination to revolt against Darius I the Great (q.v.), Hecataeus reportedly at first warned them, without success, against such a move, reminding them of the extent of the Persian imperial territory. Later he later urged them, (in vain) to strive with all possible means for mastery at sea (Herodotus 5.36). The rebels initially enjoyed partial success in their attack on Sardis, but they were soon driven back and were defeated by a Persian counter-offensive.

Hecataeus advised Aristagoras, who had decided to escape Miletus, to entrench himself on the island of Leros and wait quietly there for future developments in Miletus. His advice, however, was rejected; and Aristagoras set out for Thrace. After the failure of the rebellion, Hecataeus is said to have interceded with Artaphrenēs, the great king’s brother and the satrap of Sardis since 540 B.C.E., for lenient treatment of the Ionians (Diodorus 10.25.4).

Herodotus (2.143) reported a discussion between Hecataeus and the Egyptian priests at Thebes.

It has been suggested that Hecataeus had made numerous long journeys (see Jacoby) but it can not be determined with any degree of certainty to what extent his reports were really based on personal observations. Whether Hecataeus was an immediate pupil of the philosopher Anaximander of Miletus is an open question, but, in any case, he probably improved the latter's world-map and supplemented it with narrative accounts of the earth (ca. 510 B.C.E.?). It may have been Hecataeus's map, engraved on a bronze tablet, which, according to Herodotus (5.49), Aristagoras presented to King Cleomenes of Sparta in his efforts to convince the king that an attack into the heartland of Asia would bring him a great deal of riches.

Hecataeus is the author of *Ges Periodos Periegesis*, or *Travels Around the Earth* in two books each organized in the manner of a periplus, a point-to-point coastal survey. One book on Europe is essentially a periplus of the Mediterranean, describing each region in turn, reaching as far north as Scythia. The other book, on Asia, is arranged similarly to the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea of which a version of the 1st century AD survives. Hecataeus described the countries and inhabitants of the known world, the account of Egypt being particularly comprehensive; the descriptive matter was accompanied by a map, based upon Anaximander's<sup>1</sup> map of the earth, which he corrected and enlarged.

The earth is depicted as a circular plate, around which flows the Ōkeanos "ocean" (i.e., outer river). The map was supplemented by a descriptive account (*Periēgēsis*) that was divided into two sections, *Europē* and *Asiē*. Of the 374 surviving fragments of the work no less than 304 derive from the geographical lexicon *Ethnika* by Stephanus of Byzantium<sup>2</sup> (6th cent.

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<sup>1</sup> Anaximander (Ancient Greek: Ἀναξίμανδρος, *Anaximandros*) (c. 610 BC–c. 546 BC) was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher who lived in Miletus, a city of Ionia; Milet in modern Turkey. He belonged to the Milesian school. He learned the teachings of his master Thales. He succeeded him and became the second master of that school where he counted Anaximenes and Pythagoras amongst his pupils.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen of Byzantium, also known as Stephanus Byzantinus (Greek: Στέφανος Βυζάντιος; fl. 6th century AD) was the author of an important geographical dictionary entitled *Ethnica* (Εθνικά) of which only fragments survive. There exists an epitome compiled by Hermolaus. Little is known about Stephanus, other than he was a grammarian at Constantinople, he lived after the time of Arcadius and Honorius, and before that of Justinian II. Hermolaus dedicated his epitome to Justinian; it is not known if it was dedicated to the first or second emperor bearing that name., there is a strong probability it was dedicated to Justinian I as

C.E.). Primarily, this material contains chorographic (basic cartographic data) supplemented by *aitiai* and etymologies.

The map was organized based on contemporary coastal navigation (*periploi*)gations), depicting clockwise the shorelines of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea from Gibraltar back to Gibraltar, also displaying Asia Minor, Syria, and the entire Near East, Egypt, North Africa, the western Mediterranean region, Greece, and South Russia (the land of the Scythians). Persia, India, and Arabia, were depicted along the coasts of the Outer Sea, the “Erythraean,” as Hecataeus named the Indian Ocean.

Controversy has also given rise to discussion of the manner and extent to which Herodotus used the map of Hecataeus. This is despite Herodotus’s own words as well as the statement by Porphyry (ca. 300 C.E.) that two fairly lengthy passages from the second book of Herodotus’s *History* have been copied verbatim from Hecataeus (Jacoby, *Fragmente*, No. 1, F 324a; idem, pp. 2728 ff.). Hecataeus introduced his history with the words: “What I write here is the accounts which I consider to be true: for the stories of the Greeks.”

The four Books called *Genealogiai* (also cited as *Historiai* or *Hērōlogia*) probably date from some time after 500 B.C.E. They represent an attempt, in prose and in a lucid and rationally comprehensible approach, to classify and systematize the mythical era genealogically, including also his own family traditions (Herodotus 2.143). Although only about thirty fragments of this book have survived, still the contrast it presents to the earlier “epical” systemization of mythical materials is remarkable: Not only did Hecataeus establish in this book a fixed calendrical procedure (e.g., the era of the “Return of Heraclidae”), but he also introduced the principle of credibility into the *Hellēnōn logoi* (Jacoby, 1957, I, F 1a), based on the criterion of “rational probability” (*eikos*: Jacoby, *Fragmente*, No. F 27.)

## Logographoi people

The sixth century BCE was the *fin de siècle* of the old Greek elite. Traditionally the towns and tribes had been ruled by aristocrats, then merchants became prominent and this resulted in expansion of the town,

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Stephanus worked in Byzantium in the earlier part of the sixth century AD, under Justinian I.

The merchants now exercised much influence unlike the aristocrats, who often claimed the Homeric heroes as their ancestors and used this claim as a source of legitimacy, the new elite had no traditional prestige. The new ‘prominente’ consisted of, *Thales of Miletus*, Anaximander of Miletus, Anaximenes of Miletus, and *Heraclitus* of Ephesus, usually known as ‘the first philosophers’. Their conscientious attitude gave rise to their being considered the founders of Western science.

During the first half of the 5th. Century BCE, logographoi people wrote unadorned prose accounts of *what they thought was the truth about the past*. They didn't discount the gods, so much as *push back the time of the gods and insert in the temporal space provided a past whose rules were much as those that operated in the world around them*.

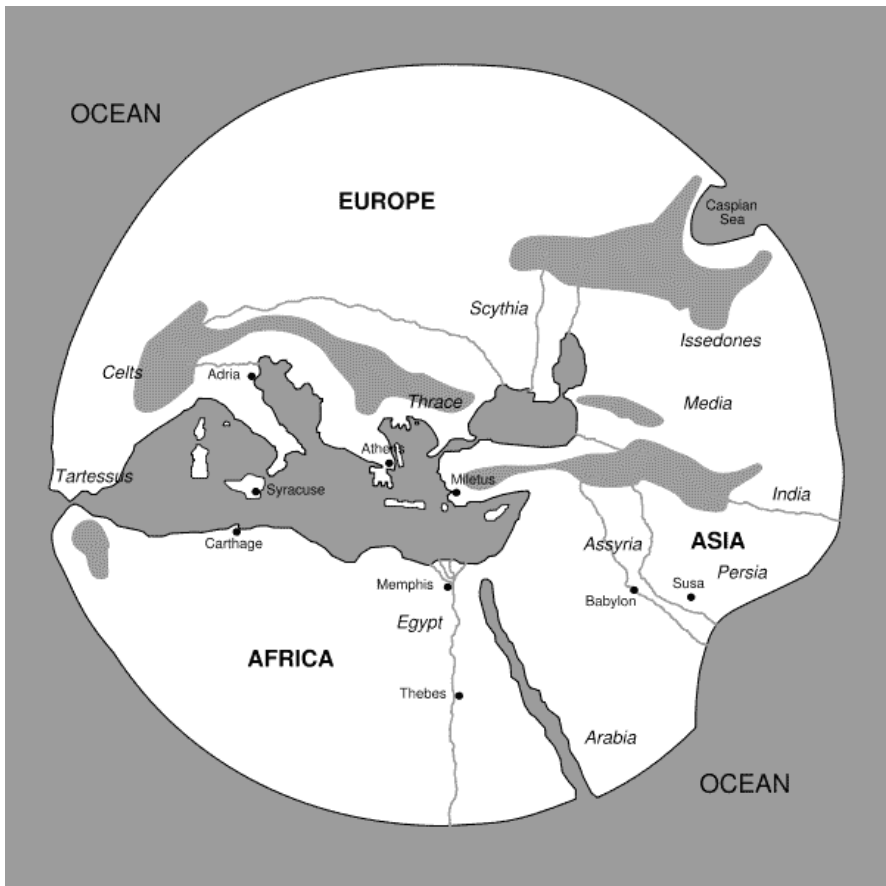
This was sometimes a weak impulse. So, instead of claiming descent from the gods in three or four or fewer generations, as did the Achaean heroes, the apparently noble Hecataeus of Miletus was modest enough to insert *sixteen mortal generations between himself and a god*. (This may have been a result of agreeing with the earlier Achaeans about how long it had been since the gods went around routinely begatting mortals, or it may have been a joke.)

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## Archaic Era Map

**(Based on a map designed by Anaximandes)**



Source: (Map) <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Bios/Hecataeus.html>

### **Hecataeus' map, described by Herodotus**

“I laugh when I see that many have designed maps of the earth, yet no one has been able to present the matter in an intelligent way. They draw an Ocean flowing round the earth, which they present as exactly circular, and they make Asia equal in size to Europe.”

The map can be seen as a synopsis of Hecataeus' Description of the earth (*Periegesis* or *Periodos ges*). In two volumes, called 'Europe' and 'Asia', the author described the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea - in the first part

from west to east, and in the second volume from east to west, including the African coast.

Sometimes, Hecataeus left the coast and went upstream along a river. The surviving fragments show that his prose was clear and unadorned, and that the author was interested in towns, distances, rivers, mountains, nations, tribes, and boundaries. Customs, animal life, flora, scenery, mythology, and the stories about the foundation of a town were not ignored. On the other hand, historical information seems to have been almost absent. The book also included the coast of the Atlantic Ocean: there was at least one reference to Melitta (modern Oualiddia) in the west of Morocco. This reference is extremely important, because it proves that Hecataeus had - direct or indirect- access to the travel log of the Carthaginian voyager *Hanno*, who had visited this region. Unfortunately, we have no idea about Hecataeus' other sources, although we know that Hecataeus visited Egypt and may assume that he received information from Greek sailors.

The *Description of the earth* survives in the form of 330 usually very brief fragments. One quote, however, is quite long: the description of Egyptian animals (hippopotamus, crocodile, *phoenix*) that can be found in the second book of Herodotus' *Histories*. Unfortunately, the story about the hippo does not really suggest that Hecataeus had actually seen this animal. It has been assumed that in the sixth century, the hippopotamus was no longer living in Egypt. Hecataeus may have heard a tale, and Herodotus must have copied it. Another story that Herodotus copied from Hecataeus is the highly schematic description of the Sahara.

Hecataeus also published the *Genealogies* (sometimes called *Histories*, 'researches'), a history of the Greek heroes. About forty fragments have survived. Its first line has become famous:

Hecataeus of Miletus says: I write down what I think is true, because the stories told by the Greeks are, in my opinion, ridiculous and countless.

This is the statement of a man who tried to systematize the loose and unrelated - and therefore ridiculous - stories told by his countrymen. Hecataeus designed a chronological system in which the gods and heroes were organized. It was not the first attempt to systematize Greek myths and legends, but it was influential. Most scholars -to start with Herodotus- accepted Hecataeus' chronology.

We may think that Hecataeus was being critical about stories that were too fanciful to be critical about - and perhaps we are right, but on the other hand: Hecataeus was one of the first scholars to skeptically research the ancient tales. Moreover, he was the first to investigate the depths of history. Hecataeus may not have been a real historian like Herodotus, but he was certainly a great mind. (*Source- livius*)

## HECATE or HEKATE ancient Greek Ἑκάτη, *Hekátē*

Greco-Roman goddess associated with magic, witches, ghosts, and crossroads.

She is attested in poetry as early as Hesiod's *Theogony*. An inscription from late archaic *Miletus* naming her as a protector of entrances is also testimony to her presence in *archaic Greek* religion.

Regarding the nature of her cult, it has been remarked, "she is more at home on the fringes than in the center of Greek polytheism. Intrinsically ambivalent and polymorphous, she straddles conventional boundaries and eludes definition." She has been associated with childbirth, nurturing the young, gates and walls, doorways, crossroads, magic, lunar lore, torches and dogs.

In *Ptolemaic Alexandria* and elsewhere during the Hellenistic period, she appears as a three-faced goddess associated with ghosts, witchcraft, and curses. Today she is claimed as a goddess of *witches* and in the context of *Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism*. Some *neo-pagans* refer to her as a "*crone* goddess", though this characterization appears to conflict with her frequent characterization as a virgin in late antiquity. She closely parallels the Roman goddess *Trivia*.

The *Theogony* (Greek: Θεογονία, *Theogonía*, the birth of God[s]) is a poem by Hesiod is believed to have been a contemporary of Homer and lived in Boeotia in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC.

The *Theogony* described the origins and genealogies of the gods of the ancient Greeks. It is written in the same artificial Epic dialect of Ancient Greek used and after a lengthy hymn to the Muses. Hesiod gives a history of the world from the earliest era up until the period when Zeus became the omnipotent King of the Gods. The work evolves with descriptions of

Chaos, Erebus, Gaia, Ouranos, Oceanus and the Titans, Kronos eventually the Goddesses, i.e., Aphrodite, Hecate, the Titan Rhea's offspring namely Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon and Zeus. The story betrays a primitive chaotic world and the Inception of the first Olympians. (*Author*)

### **Aristogoras**

Aristagoras served as deputy governor of Miletus, He was the son of Molpagoras, and son-in-law (and nephew) of Histiaeus, whom the Persians had set up as tyrant of Miletus. Aristagoras controlled Miletus while Histiaeus was being held by the Persian emperor Darius at Susa. Aristagoras was the main orchestrator of the Ionian Rebellion, when the Greek poleis of Ionia on the east coast of the Aegean Sea banded together to rebel against the rule of the Persian Empire.

Exiled citizens of Naxos came to Miletus to seek refuge. They asked Aristagoras to supply them with troops, so that they could regain control of their homeland. Aristagoras hoped that if he supplied troops, he could become ruler of Naxos, so he made a deal with the Naxians. He claimed that he did not have enough troops, but that Artaphernes, Darius' brother and the Persian satrap of Lydia, who commanded a large army and navy on the coast of Asia, could help supply troops.

The Naxians allowed Aristagoras to do their business with Artaphernes and supplied him with money. And so Aristagoras went to Sardis and told Artaphernes to attack Naxos and restore the exiles with the implication the Artaphernes would be in control of the territory. He insisted that Naxos "was a fine and fertile island, close to the Ionian coast, and rich both in treasures and slaves." Aristagoras promised that he would both fund the expedition and give Artaphernes a bonus sum. He also tempted Artaphernes by adding that capturing the island would place other poleis of the Cyclades under his control, which would serve as a base for attacking Euboea. Artaphernes agreed and promised 200 ships. The following spring, Aristagoras and the Naxian exiles sailed with the fleet. Unfortunately for the invasion, Aristagoras quarrelled with the admiral Megabates, who then informed the Naxians that the fleet was coming. Naxos then had enough time to prepare for a siege. Four months later, the siege still held, the Persians were out of supplies, and few funds remained. The expedition had failed, and they sailed home.

## The Peloponnese before Greek Inhabitation

*Hecataeus of Miletus* mentioned that prior to the time of the Greeks the Peloponnese was inhabited by barbarians. Yet one might say that in the ancient times the whole of Greece was a settlement of *barbarians*,.... whereas the Dryopes, the Caucones, the Pelasgi, the Leleges, and other such peoples, apportioned among themselves the parts that are inside the isthmus--and also the parts outside, for Attica was once held by the Thracians who came with Eumolpus, Daulis in Phocis by Tereus, *Cadmeia* by the Phoenicians who came with Cadmus, and Boeotia itself by the Aones and Temmices and Hyantes. moreover, the barbarian origin of some is indicated by their names--Cecrops, Godrus, Aëclus, Cothus, Drymas, and Crinacus. And even to the present day the Thracians, Illyrians, and Epeirotes live on the flanks of the Greeks (though this was still more the case formerly than now); indeed most of the country that at the present time is indisputably Greece is held by the barbarians--Macedonia and certain parts of Thessaly by the thracians, and the parts above Acarnania and Aetolia by the Thesproti, the Cassopaei, the Amphiloichi, the Molossi, and the Athamanes, Epeirotic tribes.

Source - Strabonis book VII

## Scepticism

Hecataeus' work, especially the *Genealogiai*, shows a marked scepticism, opening with "Hecataeus of Miletus thus speaks: I write what I deem true; for the stories of the Greeks are manifold and seem to me ridiculous not criticize the myths on their own terms; his disbelief rather stems from his broad exposure to the many contradictory mythologies he encountered in his travels.

An anecdote from Herodotus (II, 143), of a *visit to an Egyptian temple at Thebes*, is illustrative. It recounts how the priests showed Herodotus a series of statues in the temple's inner sanctum, each one supposedly set up by the high priest of each generation. Hecataeus, says Herodotus, had seen the same spectacle, after mentioning that he traced his descent, through sixteen generations, from a god.

The Egyptians compared his genealogy to their own, as recorded by the statues; since the generations of their high priests had numbered three hundred and forty-five, all entirely mortal, they refused to believe Hecataeus's claim of descent from a mythological figure. This encounter

with the immemorial antiquity of Egypt has been identified as a crucial influence on Hecataeus's scepticism: the mythologized past of the *Hellenes* shrank into insignificant fancy next to the history of a civilization that was already ancient before *Mycenae* was built

He was probably the first of the *logographers* to attempt a serious prose history and to employ critical method to distinguish myth from historical fact, though he accepts *Homer* and other poets as trustworthy authorities. Herodotus, though he once at least controverts his statements, is indebted to Hecataeus for the concept. Unlike his contemporary *Xenophanes*, he did of a prose history.

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Identified as a crucial influence on Hecataeus's scepticism: the mythologized past of the *Hellenes* shrank. *The History of History*; Shotwell, James T. (NY, Columbia University Press, 1939) p. 172

The Ancient Greek Historians; Bury, John Bagnell (NY, Dover Publications, 1958), pp. 14, 48. Detailed article on Hecataeus of Miletus, bibliography (excerpts from 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica.)

## Hecataeus in Egypt

Hecataeus of Miletus, visited Egypt between B.C. 513-501. His travels later influenced Herodotus from whom we owe much knowledge of Egypt, and he must be considered the earliest Greek writer upon Egypt. Hellanitus of Mytilene, B.C. 478-393, shows in his *Αἰγυπτιακά* that he has some accurate knowledge of the meaning of some hieroglyphic words. Democritus wrote upon the hieroglyphics of Meroë but this work is lost. Herodotus says that the Egyptians used two quite different kinds of writing, one of which is called sacred (hieroglyphic), the other common (demotic). Diodorus says that the Ethiopian letters are called by the Egyptians "hieroglyphics."

Strabo, speaking of the obelisks at Thebes, says that there are inscriptions upon them which proclaim the riches and power of their kings, and that their rule extends even to Scythia, Bactria, and India. Chaeremon of Naucratis, who lived in the first half of the first century after Christ, and who must be an entirely different person from Chaeremon the companion of Aelius Gallus (B.C.25), Greek writers upon Egyptian hieroglyphics

derided by Strabo, and charged with lying by Josephus wrote a work on Egyptian hieroglyphics, *περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων*, which has been lost. He appears to have been attached to the great library of Alexandria, and as he was a "sacred scribe," it may therefore be assumed that he had access to many important works on hieroglyphics, and that he understood them.

He is mentioned by Eusebius as *Χαίρημων ὁ ἱερογραμματεὺς*, and by Suidas, but neither of these writers gives any information as to the contents of his work on hieroglyphics, and we should have no idea of the manner of work it was but for the extract preserved by John Tzetzes on Egyptian hieroglyphics. John Tzetzes (Τζέτζης, born about AD. 1110, died after AD. 1180). Tzetzes was a man of considerable learning and literary activity, and his works have value on account of the lost books which are quoted in them. In his *Chiliades* (Bk. V., line 395) he speaks of ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ἱερογραμματεὺς Χαίρημων, and refers to Chaeremon's διδάγματα τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων.

In his *Exegesis* of Homer's *Iliad* he gives an extract from the work itself, and we are able to see at once that it was written by one who was able to give his information at first hand. This interesting extract was first brought to the notice of the world by the late Dr. Birch, who published a paper on it in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, Vol. III., second series, 1850, pp. 385-396. In it he quoted the Greek text of the extract, from the edition of Tzetzes' *Exegesis*, first published by Hermann, and added remarks and hieroglyphic characters illustrative of it, together with the scholia of Tzetzes

Source - <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/trs/trs02.htm>

*Hecataeus was one of the first classical writers to mention the Celtic people.*

## History of the Celts (The Keltoi)

### *Who Were the Celts?*

Ancient Greek historians, like Herodotus (400 BC) and Hecataeus of Miletus (500 BC), wrote about the Keltoi, a group of Iron Age "barbarian" tribes with a common language and culture that inhabited vast territories of Europe.

Most of these Greek and Roman authors whose works have survived didn't have any first hand knowledge of the Celts. *Most of the extant writing comes from* the first two centuries of the common era, and *rely on observations of the Stoic philosopher*<sup>3</sup> Posidonius, early 1st century BC, whose own writings have been lost. His information was based on first hand knowledge of Celtic society in Gaul. Scraps of his writings are contained in later writings, especially Athenaeus, Diodorus Siculus, mid 1st century BC and Strabo 40 BC-25 AD.

The Keltoi's dominion stretched from Ireland and the western Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) in the west to Bohemia (Czech Republic), Bavaria (Germany) and Austria<sup>4</sup> the east. The Celts were a mixture of western Indo-European peoples who created vivid ornamental art and spoke a language described by the Romans as Celtic. Their social power structure included warlords and priests known as druids. They lived in hill towns made to defend populated areas from other warring Celtic tribes. With the arrival of the Roman Empire, Celtic civilization nearly disappeared. Most of western Europe, except Ireland, was Romanized. According to Caesar there are no contemporary religious writings from the Celts themselves because, as the Celts had a *religious prohibition against writing things down*.

From Posidonius we learn that Celts subscribed to the Pythagorean idea of transmigration of the soul, which Caesar mentions as well though he couches it in terms of making the fighters unafraid of death. Julius Caesar had the opportunity to see Celts at first hand, both on the continent and in Britain, but his concerns were mainly military. His writings also served as propaganda to raise money for his campaign against them. He wasn't particularly interested in religion other to note the influence of the Druids on the nobility. Caesar describes the Druids, saying they 'officiate at the

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<sup>3</sup> Posidonius (Greek: Ποσειδώνιος / Poseidonios) "of Apameia" (ὁ Ἀπαμεύς) or "of Rhodes" (ὁ Ῥόδιος) (ca. 135 BCE - 51 BCE), was a Greek stoic, philosopher, politician, astronomer, geographer, historian and teacher native to Apamea, Syria. He was acclaimed as the greatest polymath of his age. None of his vast body of work can be read in its entirety today, as it exists only in fragments.

<sup>4</sup> The first discovery of the Celts occurred at Hallstatt, in Austria. In 1846. A mining inspector (Johann Georg Ramsauer) discovered a burial ground. Later Rudolf Pertner described the finds at the site included, pins, brooches, belts, earrings, daggers, spear-heads, axes and bronze pots and numerous earthen ware items. The finds are since then described as "The Hallstatt Culture". Source- 'The Celts' Econ Verlag 1975, Gerhard Herm.

worship of the Gods, regulate public and private sacrifices, and give rulings on all religious questions. Large numbers of young men flock to them for instruction and they are held in great honour by the people. They act as judges in practically all disputes whether between tribes or between individuals.' He also noted that the Druids had the power to ban someone from the sacrifice, which meant both excommunication and shunning by the community. He mentions that there are many and diverse deities but does not name them except to use the name of whichever Roman deity possessed similar attributes.

Source; Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists Book 4 (excerpts) *Translated by C.D.Yonge (1854)*. Edited and abridged – R.D.Morrith

### ***The Celts in Ireland***

In Ireland, the Celts prospered. Ireland was linguistically untouched for many centuries, protected by the sea which made it inconvenient and inaccessible to Roman invaders. It was also unique in being the only western European country, with the exception of the Viking north, to which Christianity came without the Roman conquest. Old pagan festivals like Bealtaine, Samhan and Lughnasa, became 'Saints' days. From the 8th through 10th century, Vikings raided and set up colonies in eastern Ireland. Later came the Norman invaders and the English, who subdued Ireland and suppressed its Gaelic language until the early 20th century.

### ***The Celts in the British Isles***

With the arrival of the Romans, the Celts in the British Isles were pushed to inaccessible regions. Celtic traditions and language were maintained in the remoter parts of Great Britain: Cornwall, western Wales and the Highlands of Scotland. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Great Britain was conquered by northern Germanic tribes: Angles, Saxons and Jutes, in the 5th and 6th centuries AD.

### ***The Celts in the Iberian Peninsula***

Most Celts settled in the northwestern Iberian peninsula (Galicia, Asturias, Tras-os-Montes). In other parts of western Iberia they became known as Celtiberians. Far from home, they mixed with the local population. It took two centuries for the Romans to subdue Iberian Celts because of widespread guerrilla fighting. In the end, most of Spain and Portugal were Romanized and Latin replaced all pre-Roman languages except Basque.

When the Roman Empire fell, most of Spain and Portugal were conquered by the Visigoths, except Galicia where a Germanic tribe known as the Sueves formed an independent kingdom. Galicia and Asturias in Spain and Tras-os-Montes in Portugal are currently the Iberian regions with deeper Celtic roots.

### *The Celts in France*

The "barbarians" who inhabited France during the Roman invasion were known as Gauls, a Celtic culture. The Celts, who were already a mixture of peoples, mingled with the conquered population. With Romanization, the Celtic language disappeared from France. After the Romans, Franks and Burgundians took over most of France, including Brittany. The Breton language was re-imported from the British Isles in the 6th and 7th century when Celts from Wales colonized the region. It was a re-Celtization of Brittany, ethnically and culturally.

### *Poseidonius (Describes the Celts)*

Poseidonius mentions; And Poseidonius the Stoic, in the histories which he composed in a manner by no means inconsistent with the philosophy which he professed, writing of the laws that were established and the customs which prevailed in many nations, says , " The Celts place food before their guests, putting grass for their seats, and they serve it up on wooden tables raised a very little above the ground; and their food consists of a few loaves, and a good deal of meat brought up floating in water, and roasted on the coals or on spits. And they eat their meat in a cleanly manner enough, but like lions, taking up whole joints in both their hands and gnawing them; and if there is any which they cannot easily tear away, they cut it off with a small sword which they have in a sheath in a special box.

Those who live near the rivers eat fish also, and so do those who live near the Mediterranean sea, or near the Atlantic ocean; and they eat it roasted with salt and vinegar and cumin seed: and cumin seed they also throw into their wine. But they use no oil, on account of its scarcity; and because they are not used to it, it seems disagreeable to them. but when many of them sup together, they all sit in a circle; and the bravest sits in the middle, like the *coryphaeus* of a chorus; because he is superior to the rest either in his military skill, or in birth, or in riches: and the man who gives the entertainment sits next to him; and then on each side the rest of the guests

sit in regular order, according as each is eminent or distinguished for anything.

Their armour-bearers, bearing their large oblong shields, called *thureoi*, stand behind; and their spear-bearers sit down opposite in a circle, and feast in the same manner as their masters. And those who act as cup-bearers and bring round the wine, bring it round in jars made either of earthenware or of silver, like ordinary casks in shape, and the name they give them is ἀμβίκοç and their platters on which they serve up the meat are also made of the same material; but some have brazen platters, and some have wooden or plaited baskets.

The liquor which is drunk is, among the rich, wine brought from Italy or from the country about Massilia; and this is drunk unmixed, but sometimes a little water is mixed with it. But among the poorer classes what is drunk is a beer made of wheat prepared with honey, and oftener still without any honey; and they call it κόρυα. And they all drink it out of the same cup, in small draughts, not drinking more than a *cyathus* at a time; but they take frequent draughts: and a slave carries the liquor round, beginning at the right hand and going on to the left; and this is the way in which they are waited on, and in which they worship the gods, always turning towards the right hand."

Poseidonius continued, relating the riches of Luernius the father of Bitýis, who was subdued by the Romans, says that "he, aiming at becoming a leader of the populace, used to drive in a chariot over the plains, and scatter gold and silver among the myriads of Celts who followed him; and that he enclosed a fenced space of twelve furlongs in length every way, square, in which he erected wine-presses, and filled them with expensive liquors; and that he prepared so vast a quantity of eatables that for very many days any one who chose was at liberty to go and enjoy what was there prepared, being waited on without interruption or cessation. And once, when he had issued beforehand invitations to a banquet, some poet from some barbarian tribe came too late and met him on the way, and sung a hymn in which he extolled his magnificence, and bewailed his own misfortune in having come too late: and Luernius was pleased with his ode, and called for a bag of gold, and threw it to him as he was running by the side of his chariot; and that he picked it up, and then went on singing, saying that his very footprints upon the earth over which he drove produced benefits to men." Those now are the accounts of the Celts given by Poseidonius in the twenty-third book of his history.

It is to Pliny the Elder, 1st century AD, that we owe our image of the Druids cutting mistletoe<sup>5</sup> with a golden sickle. It was an afterthought on the mistletoe entry in his book on trees. The word he used was 'sacerdos' not Druid, and it was probably the Vates who would perform such a ritual. We get this division of the Celtic 'priesthood' from Strabo's 'Geographica' written at the end of the 1st century BC, which states 'Among all the Gallic peoples, generally speaking, there are three sets of men and women who are held in exceptional honour: the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids. The Bards are singers and poets; the Vates, diviners and natural philosophers; while the Druids, in addition to natural philosophy, study also moral philosophy.'

It is popularly accepted that mistletoe was revered by the ancient Druids, although the only known classical reference describing the ritual gathering of mistletoe was the following account written in the first century by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*:

For they believe that whatever grows on these trees is sent from heaven, and is a sign that the tree has been chosen by the gods themselves. The mistletoe is very rarely to be met with; but when it is found, they gather it with solemn ceremony. This they do above all on the sixth day of the moon, from whence they date the beginnings of their months, of their years, and of their thirty years cycle, because by the sixth day the moon has plenty of vigour and has not run half its course.

After due preparations have been made for a sacrifice and a feast under the tree, they hail it as the universal healer and bring to the spot two white bulls, whose horns have never been bound before. A priest clad in a white robe climbs the tree and with a golden sickle cuts the mistletoe, which is caught in a white cloth. Then they sacrifice the victims, praying that the gods will make their gifts propitious to those to whom they have given it. They believe that a potion prepared from the mistletoe will make barren animals to bring forth, and that the plant is a remedy against all poisons. (from *Naturalis Historia* (XVI, 95) by Pliny the Elder).

Additionally, Irish vernacular evidence does tend to support this three part division. Classical sources tended to sensationalise Celtic religion. They were, after all writing about foreigners who were considered barbarians. Like today it's the unconventional and 'uncivilised' information that received the most attention, there was little accurate information about the Celtic Deities, as the authors tended to use their own Gods, already

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<sup>5</sup> Druid Mistletoe Gathering.

understood by the populous, who they thought nearest to worship of the Celtic Gods. Again like today they were the sensationalist's like Lucan 1st century AD, who reported that the three major Gods of the Gauls demanded human sacrifice, Taranis (burning), Teutates (drowning), and Esus (hanging and wounding). The Romans had banned human sacrifice only a generation or two earlier and this was reported, so the Romans could be seen to be superior beings, early propaganda.

The classical writers of the day also describe the Celt's appearance, Diodorus tells of the men of the Gauls being tall and fair with loud voices and piercing eyes, and the women being nearly as big and strong and as fierce as their menfolk. Tacitus described the Caledonii of Scotland as having reddish hair and large loose limbs, the Silurians of Wales described as swarthy, with dark curly hair. Dio Cassius as large and frightening, with bright red hair, Strabo records that both sexes liked to wear lots of jewellery, this is confirmed by archaeological findings, showing heavy torcs, brooches, rings, necklets and bracelets.

An idealised picture of the classical Celt is best described by Virgil in the following quote, 'Golden is their hair, and golden is their garb. They are resplendent in their striped cloaks, and their milk-white necks are circled in gold.'

Inscriptions on alters and votive objects provide almost 400 names of Celtic deities, unfortunately many of the names just appear the once, and have no evidence about the deity, others had descriptive epithets added to their names, others are paired to Roman deities, allows us to guess more accurately about their Celtic counterparts.

Some classical Roman deities receive Celtic epithets, and classical Gods often received Celtic consorts. The Celts were seen to have a hierarchy in the sense of a coherent pantheon dwelling in some remote place. The human world and the Otherworld formed a unity in which the human and divine interact. Each location has numinous powers which are acknowledged by the people as we can see by their naming of mountains, rivers and other natural features many of which have associated deities.

When the Celts invaded Greece in 278 BC, Brennus entered the precinct of Delphi, saw no gold and silver dedications, only stone and wooden statues and he laughed at the Greeks for setting up deities in human form. Caesar mentions that the Germans worship the forces of nature only.

## **Baltic trade routes – Amber - Hypoboreans**

For worship of gods and goddesses, the Balts erected temples or sanctuaries the remains of which were excavated in the mounds of Tushemlia and Gorodok on the Sozh River, now in Russia (3rd - 4th centuries) on the Blagoveshchensk hill on the Desna River near Briansk, now in Russia (5th - 6th centuries, on the Bačkininkėliai mound near Prienai, Lithuania (1st - 5th centuries), etc. Of later times, well-known are the Romovė temple in Prussia, the Perkūnas temple in Vilnius, the supposed goddess of love Milda temple near Kaunas, etc.

An analogy is easily drawn between the Baltic mythology and the mythology of Indo-Aryans, Greeks, Romans and other ancient peoples. Even the names of certain gods are similar. No doubt, the northern and southern nations communicated as early as 2000 B.C., as evidenced by finds of Baltic amber in Crete, Troy, Egypt and other countries of the Mediterranean. Evidence of a direct contact has been fixed by *Hecataeus of Miletus* and Pindar (5th century B.C.) and Herodotus (4th century B.C.) who mention the Hyperboreans who lived north of the Scythian tribes. The Hyperboreans were said to have the same religion as the Greeks. Their land was considered the birth-place of titaness Letona (Leto), mother of the twin-gods Artemis and Apollo. Apollo visited his motherland every year and spent the winter months there. Rybakov after analyzing existing historical sources, concludes that the Hyperboreans of the 6th - 5th centuries B.C. were Baltic tribes. Source:

<http://www.lithuanian.net/mitai/cosmos/baltai5.htm>

### ***Yevpatoria (Chavka)***

The most interesting. Yevpatoria is one of the oldest cities in Eastern Europe. The remains of fortification wall Kerkenitida – a prosperous ancient city, *known to the first geographer Hecataeus of Miletus* and the ‘father of history’ Herodotus can be seen on the Gorky quay (Military health resort beach). Greco-Scythian settlement “Chayka” (the name is conventional) is found near the pioneer camp “Luchistiy” is the northern outskirts of the city. But in the center the witnesses of medieval pages in the history of these places are preserved.

Source - *Главная* (Yevpatoria)