Herodotus was an ancient Greek historian, today referred to as the ‘Father of History’. Born in Halicarnassus, Caria (modern day Bodrum, Turkey), Herodotus lived in the 5th Century B.C (c. 484 BC- c. 425 BC), and produced his one and only masterpiece *The Histories*. In *The Histories*, Herodotus recounts the expansion of the Achaemenid Empire under its king, which then follows King Xerxes’ expedition in 480 BCE against the Greeks. He also retells the battle of Salamis, Plateea and Mycale.

Herodotus was also referred to as the “Father of Lies”. This was due to the fact that a large amount of his stories were not historically accurate (a section of his retellings occurred before he was even born, and other recounts were told in a biased form). Herodotus was also known to exaggerate many of his recounts. Not much is known about the life of Herodotus. As aforementioned, he was born in modern day Bodrum, but we can find clues from his *Histories* to find out more about him. In his book, Herodotus maintains the predominant presence of the island Samos, leading us to believe that he spent a large amount of time on it.

**What Herodotus taught us about Ancient Egyptian Medicine**

Herodotus is one of our most important sources when looking at ancient societies. In particular he wrote extensively of Ancient Egypt, including Ancient Egyptian medicine. Although we have no way of measuring its accuracy, it is one of our best recounts of how the Ancient Egyptians related to hygiene and disease. Most of our information comes from the chapter Euteurpes in his book of history. The main three areas he covered were daily hygiene, diet, and prevention of disease.
Hygiene: From Herodotus’ writing we can see that the Ancient Egyptians had an extensive knowledge of hygiene, most of which developed into daily habits. Historians speculate on the reasons for the Ancient Egyptian’s cleanliness – and whether it was for religious or medical purposes. However it cannot be denied that Ancient Egypt was well before its time. For example, Herodotus says “they washed… twice a day and every night they wash in cold water”. This was very advanced for their time. He also wrote “They are careful to wear newly washed linen clothing demonstrating Ancient Egyptian society’s level of hygiene extending to wearing clean clothes. Another quote is “cups of bronze are cleaned daily”. The Ancient Egyptians were showing displays of basic hygiene of which it would take other societies hundreds of years to develop.

Diet: The Ancient Egyptians also knew how important diet was to their health. Herodotus again enlightens us on this topic, writing “they purge themselves… they think all diseases stem from the foods they eat”. Again this was demonstrative of how much Ancient Egyptians knew for their time.

Preventative: In Ancient Egypt, the priests of medicine (modern day doctors) were already developing ways not just to treat disease but to prevent it too. For example “Each Egyptian has a net. He uses it to fish by day but at night spreads it over his bed to keep off mosquitoes”. This would have helped prevent numerous diseases because mosquitoes are a carrier and transmitter of many life-threatening illnesses such as malaria. Herodotus also tells us of “… shave their whole body every third day so as no lice may infect them” and “they practiced circumcision for the sake of cleanliness”, further widening our knowledge of medicinal knowledge in Ancient Egypt.

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