

A 2,500-Year-Old Warning to America

Herodotus' *Histories* is considered the first work of history produced in the Western world. Written around 450 B.C., it serves as a valuable source of information about the civilizations and cultures of the ancient world, and until recently, has been an important fixture in Western students' education.

The text of the *Histories* (in English translation) numbers about 600 pages. But you don't have to go far (Book I.5) until you run into its most famous line, which acts as something of a summary of the whole work. It also serves as an admonition to America today:

"For most of those cities which were great once are small today; and those which used to be small were great in my own time. Knowing, therefore, that human prosperity never abides long in the same place, I shall pay attention to both alike."

More recently, Will Durant reached a similarly somber conclusion in his *Lessons of History*:

"Nations die. Old regions grow arid, or suffer other change. Resilient man picks up his tools and his arts, and moves on, taking his memories with him. If education has deepened and broadened those memories, civilization migrates with him, and builds somewhere another home."

For decades now, America has been the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. And if you believe Obama in the most recent State of the Union address, "The United States of America is [still] the most powerful nation on Earth. Period."

However, a number of people today are under the impression

that America is in decline, and many signs seem to point in that direction. Can things be turned around? Sure. There's no necessity when it comes to human activities and history. With proper vigilance, leadership, and decision-making, the U.S. could conceivably right the ship.

But will they be turned around? In reaching an answer to that question, historical patterns and the experience of past eras are still instructive, and show that an about-face is difficult to say the least.

"Human prosperity never abides long in the same place."