Throughout his *Histories*, Herodotus uses a distinct ethnographic style to relay information to his audience that can be studied through the use of n-grams, which are particular sequences of “n” (a number of) words in a text. By electronically isolating these sequences, we are able to identify a pattern in Herodotus’ language and writing style which highlights how he views the subject matter. We isolated the n-gram “μὲν οὖ πιστὰ λέγοντες” which means “indeed the things being said are not believable” and used it to analyze his narration. This four-word n-gram appears five times throughout the *Histories*, and they all appear in relation to a certain ethnography. In describing the customs and details of other tribes and ethnic groups, he is careful to include as much relevant information as possible. He even includes information he believes to be inaccurate and lets his audience know when this happens. He takes a humanistic approach, viewing divine and superstitious claims with skepticism. Although he does not believe some of what has been reported to him, he feels obligated to do so for the sake of his ethnography. His ethnographies outline three distinct themes among the ethnic groups he encounters: *phusis*, which pertains to the divine and glorious deeds; *nomos*, which describes cultures and the social laws and rules that govern them; and dynastic history, which describes the events that shape monarchies and people who govern.
The 4-gram is contained within passages 1.182, 2.73, 4.5, 4.25, and 5.86. In each instance, Herodotus is outlining his usual ethnography of the groups on which he chooses to focus. As soon as the reports sound unreasonable or superstitious to Herodotus, he inserts his opinion, stating “μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες.” It indicates something that he thinks is wrong but deems too important to leave out.

Many of the mythical and outrageous accounts pertain to the divine. Chapter 1.182 is a good example of *phusis* because it is a great erga, or deed, of a god, and by the fact that it is related to the divine. In this chapter, Herodotus describes a story that is told by the Chaldeans. In this story, the Assyrian god Baal has a tendency to sleep with a woman at a shrine in Thebes, and with another woman, a prophetess in Patara in the state of Lycia (modern day Turkey). But in telling his audience all of this, he goes on to share his skepticism. Herodotus is clearly a very rational person, and a god regularly sleeping with human women in multiple locations contradicts his more enlightened understanding of how the world works.

Chapter 2.73 is a good example of *nomos* in the *Histories* because it sheds light on the cultural norms of the Egyptians. This passage describes the activities of a phoenix according to the people of Heliopolis. These people say that hardly anyone has the chance to see the bird, for it only comes into Egypt once every five hundred years. It flies from Arabia to the temple of the sun, carrying his father encased in myrrh.
Herodotus indicates that he finds this hard to believe. This passage is included as part of a series describing animals that the Egyptians consider sacred. The Ancient Egyptians considered the phoenix to be a highly sacred animal. Thus, while the details of the story are false in the eyes of Herodotus, he does not remove it from his account because it reflects a cultural attitude of the Egyptians.

An instance of dynastic history can be found in chapter 4.5. It describes a Scythian story about a man named Targitaus, born of Zeus and a river goddess, who had three sons. One day a golden plow, a sword, yolk, and a flask fell out of the sky and only one son was able to pick them up. This son was given royal power. It falls under dynastic history because it describes the origin of the Scythian nation, and the obvious incredulity of objects falling out of the sky led Herodotus to disbelieve it.

Using an electronic search tool to identify n-grams does come with some limitations. The results are arguably a crude breakdown of Herodotus’ text and therefore require closer reading in order to identify significant vocabulary and language patterns. The tool relies on the reader to tease out specific conclusions from its results, which limits its effectiveness if used incorrectly. The tool is also rather meaningless without context, and one must have background knowledge of the subject matter to use it properly. Despite these shortcomings, n-grams allow users to identify language patterns and insights that might otherwise go unnoticed.