

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAPTER 1

SOURCES, CHRONOLOGY, METHOD

D. M. LEWIS

As far as source material is concerned, the period covered by this volume falls, for the writer of political history, into three sections, which present sharply contrasting problems of method.¹ For the period from 435 to 411 B.C. Thucydides provides a firm framework. For the period from 478 to 435, he gives us some relatively full narrative on special points and a sketchy narrative from 477 to 440; the only connected narrative of any size is that by Diodorus Siculus. For 411 to 404 we have two connected narratives, by Xenophon and Diodorus.

Thucydides,² son of Olorus of the deme Halimous, born perhaps about 460, was related in some way to Cimon and to Thucydides son of Melesias.³ Like Cimon, he had Thracian connexions, as is indicated by his father's name (cf. Hdt. vi. 39. 3) and his own statement (iv. 105. 1) that he had possessions in the gold mines east of the river Strymon which gave him great influence with the mainlanders of that area. Of his early life we know nothing, but can readily infer his total immersion in the intellectual excitement which the sophists were bringing to Athens.⁴ His military career begins and ends for us with his tenure of the generalship in 424/3 (p. 427 below). After his failure at Amphipolis he was in exile from Athens for twenty years (v. 26. 5), and this gave him the opportunity to watch events, not less from the Peloponnesian side; he says nothing of his ability to watch Athens. His intention of writing a history of the Peloponnesian War had in some sense been formed from its beginning in 431 (i. 1. 1). How long he lived after 404, we have no means of telling.⁵

Our manuscripts call his book *Historiai*; there is no reason to think that this, 'Investigations', would have been his title for what he probably thought of as his *xyngraphe* or *xyngamma*, 'Composition'. They divide it into eight books (a division into thirteen books was also current in antiquity). Of these, Book I is introductory and carries the story down to

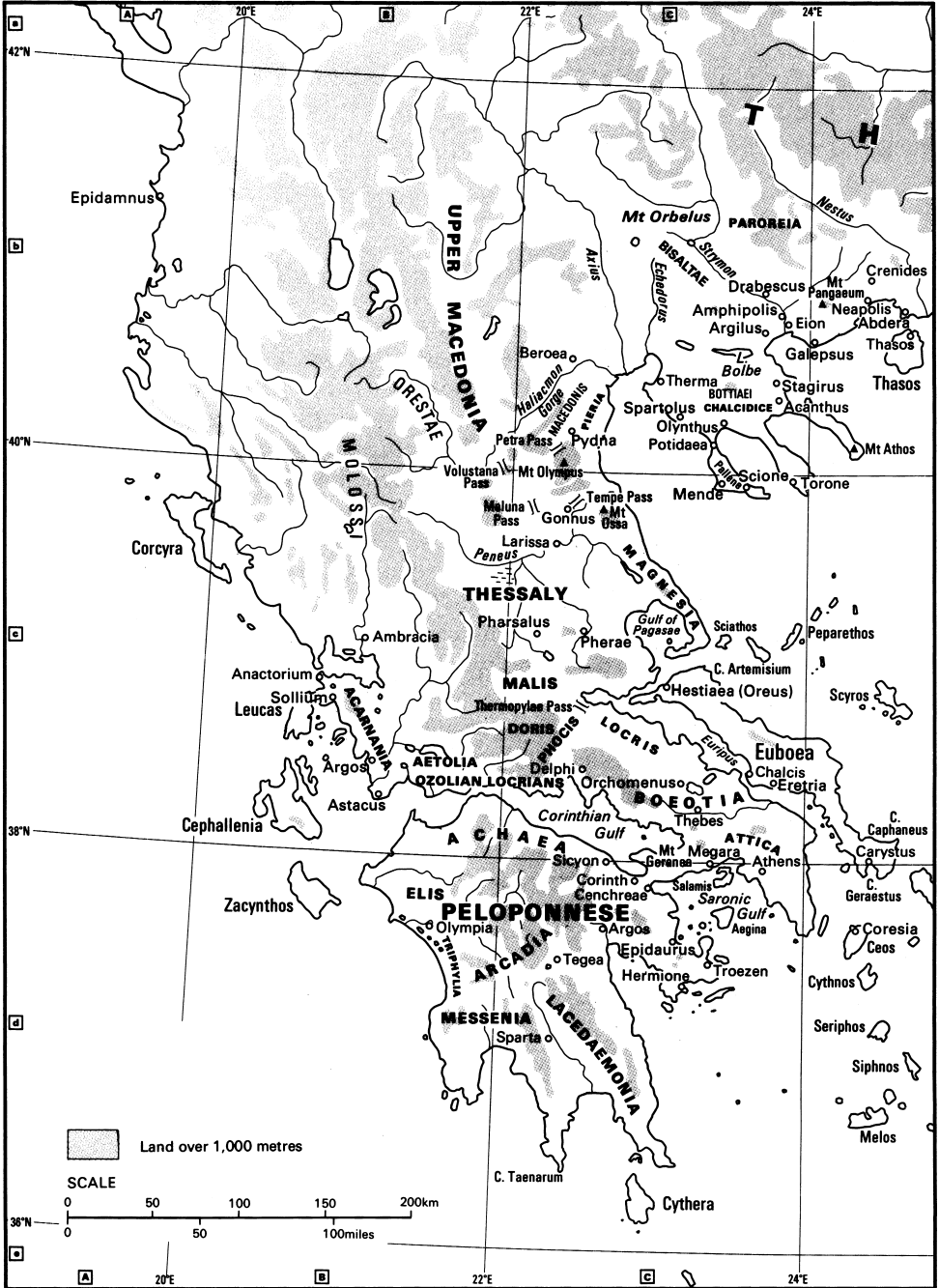
¹ For most of the topics covered in this chapter, see also Gomme, *HCT* Introduction.

² On Thucydides in general see Luschnat 1971 (C 68), Dover 1973 (C 27), Hornblower 1987 (C 52).

³ Cavaignac 1929 (D 13); Wade-Gery 1958 (A 121) 246–7; Davies 1971 (L 27) 233–6.

⁴ Finley 1942 (C 30) 36–73, and see pp. 359–62 below; cf. e.g. Macleod 1983 (A 82) 54–6, 125–31.

⁵ It has been argued by Pouilloux and Salviat 1983 (C 79) that he was still writing Book VIII after 396; I do not accept their evidence (see also Cartledge 1984 (F 15) and p. 44 n. 36).



1 Greece and Western Asia Minor

Cambridge University Press

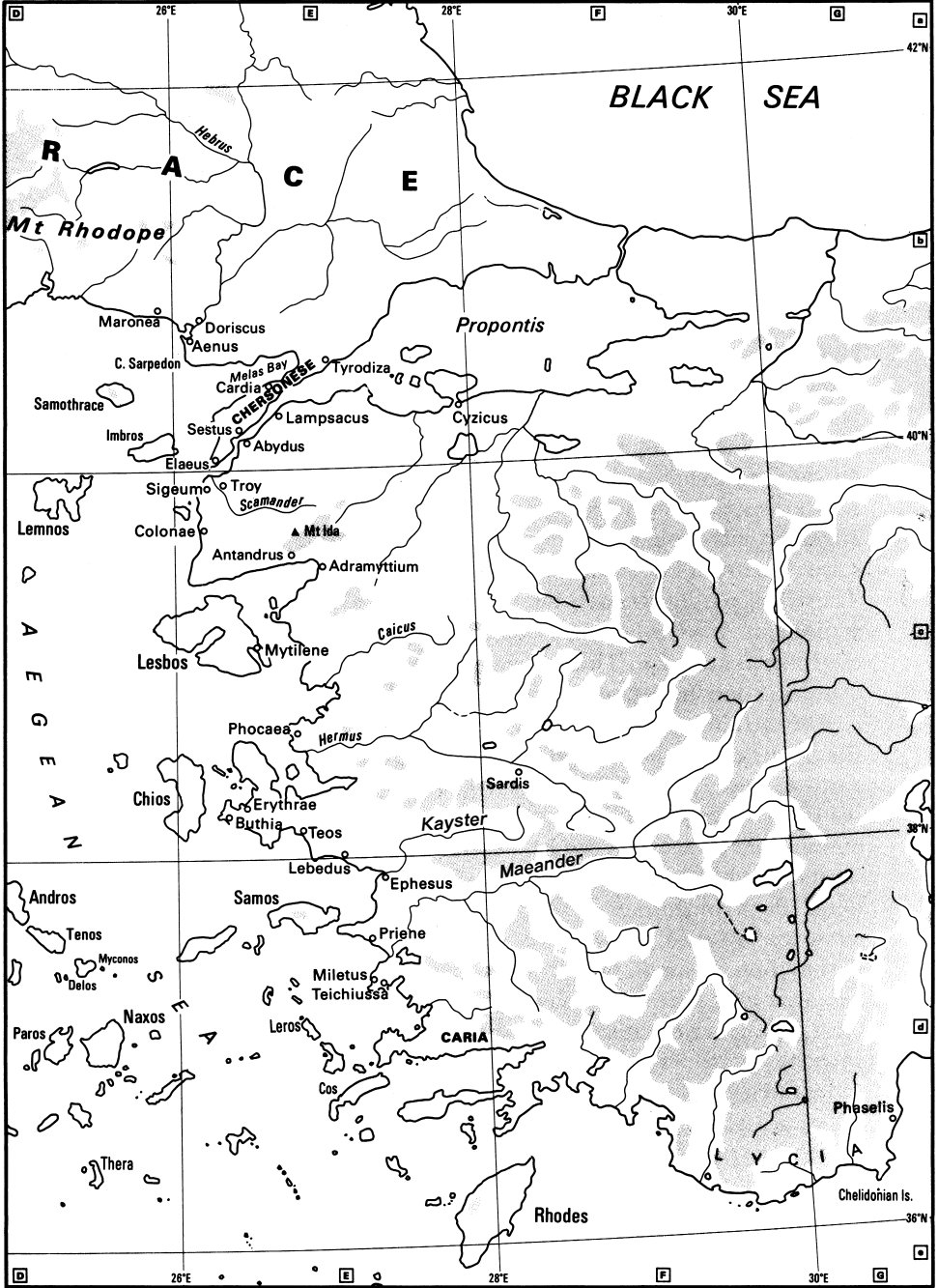
978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SOURCES, CHRONOLOGY, METHOD



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the period immediately before the outbreak of war in 431. The remaining books are organized by war-years, each divided into a summer and a winter. This distinguishes the work sharply from that of Herodotus, which has no open chronological scheme, less sharply from that of other contemporary writers (he has at least Hellanicus in mind), who arranged by other types of year, by Athenian archons or by the year of the current priestess of Hera at Argos (v.19.2, cf. II.2.1). Such arrangements he thought imprecise (v.19.3, cf. I.97.2); how great a degree of precision is to be attributed to the beginning and end of his seasons is disputed.

There is general agreement that Book VIII, which breaks off in mid-sentence in late summer 411, represents a fairly early stage of composition; parallel narratives, sometimes hardly more than extended notes, stand side by side without close correlation, and there are no speeches worked up into direct speech; there is no reason to think that what we have was written at all long after the events described.⁶ Book V, from chapter 27 to its end, also has no speeches, apart from the Melian Dialogue (v.85–113; see pp. 445–6), but, apart from this, what has appeared incompleteness may be in some part due to the nature of the subject matter.⁷ For the rest of the work arguments tend to be subjective. There are passages, notably II.65.12, VI.15.3–4, which were certainly written in or after 404, but there is no means of telling how much continuous attention Thucydides gave to his manuscript or whether his criteria of incompleteness would have been the same as ours.⁸

The introductory chapters of Book I, intended in form to demonstrate the greatness of the Peloponnesian War, give by the way a history of early Greece, and carry an ever-growing weight of observation on historical method. There are limitations, we are told (I.21), on the amount of truth which can be asserted about the past; I.22 passes to the limitations of his work on the war. Speeches were hard to remember in detail both by him and by his informants, and there will be some subjectivity (*ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστα εἰπεῖν*, 'as I thought the several individuals or groups would have said what they had to say about the situation'); that point is at least clear, whatever the nuances of the qualifications;⁹ correspondingly the speeches in the work are normally introduced and concluded with indefinite pronouns (e.g. οἱ μὲν Κερκυραῖοι ἔλεξαν τοιάδε (I.31.4) . . .

⁶ For all this see Andrewes, *HCT* v, including pp. 4, 369–75, for arguments about the date of writing, ignored by Pouilloux and Salviat (above, n. 5). But see Connor 1984 (C 22) 217–21 (hardly tenable).

⁷ Andrewes, *HCT* IV 63, Connor 1984 (C 22) 44–7, but see Andrewes, *HCT* v 375–9.

⁸ See Andrewes, *HCT* v 363, 400–5.

⁹ For discussions of what Thucydides is saying here and his actual practice in speech-writing (not necessarily the same thing), see: Gomme 1937 (A 49) 156–9 and *HCT* I 146–8; Andrewes 1962 (C 5) 64–71; de Ste Croix 1972 (G36) 7–16; Stadter, ed. 1973 (C 95); Andrewes, *HCT* v 393–9; Macleod 1983 (A 82) 52–3, 68–70; Hornblower 1987 (C 52) 45–72.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

τοιαῦτα μὲν οἱ Κερκυραῖοι εἶπον (I.36.4)), by contrast with the definite pronouns which introduce and conclude documents (e.g. IV.117.3, 119.3; V.17.2, 20.1). The subjectivity allowed for speeches is explicitly renounced for facts:

as for the events of what was done in the war, I did not think it right to write them on the basis of eyewitness reports or my own opinion [οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει responding to ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ above], but by checking every detail as carefully as possible, both where I was present and when I heard from others. Investigation was laborious, because those present at each event did not say the same things about the same event, but were influenced by their partisanship or memory.

Only very occasionally does Thucydides underline uncertainty about facts, but for the battle of Mantinea in 418, where he has occasion to report a difficulty about finding out the truth (v.68.2), the indefinite pronoun of uncertainty recurs (v.79.1 καὶ ἡ μὲν μάχη τοιαύτη καὶ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τούτων ἐγένετο, 'and the battle happened *in such a way*, as near as possible to this').

Thucydides' high competence and devotion to truth are not to be doubted, and we can place much greater reliance on what he gives us for the years 435–411 than on our materials for most other periods of ancient history.¹⁰ The difficulty here lies in our dependence on what he gives us. This is a great deal, but he has assimilated his source material and concealed his workings. On the other hand, there has inevitably been selectivity, and we should not expect to be told everything that happened. Sometimes there is warning, as, for example, when all the Athenian invasions of the Megarid from 431 to 424 are disposed of in advance (II.31.3), not to be recalled until they are again relevant (IV.66.1, slightly discrepant). Sometimes there is not, and we are left to wonder, for example, whether there were indeed only three tribute-collecting expeditions during the Archidamian War (II.69.1, III.19, IV.50.1), or whether it is not rather the case that these were regular annual events (cf. Arist. *Ath.Pol.* 24.3) which Thucydides only reports when something of interest occurred. These possibilities on the plane of simple military operations turn into certainties when we contemplate the more political developments which he chose to describe in general terms or to indicate by a brief statement about hostility between individuals (e.g. IV.27.5, VI.15.2) when it seemed relevant. Nothing is said of the personal stories about Pericles' political difficulties in the years before the war, even though they were already current in the fifth century. The ostracism of Hyperbolus (below, p. 442), which must have started as a major political event, is not reported in its place. That Thucydides does not report an

¹⁰ For a recent investigation of why we feel this, see Connor 1985 (C 23).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

event is not a reason for believing that it did not happen, and, if our interests take us that way, we have a duty to try to fill the gaps. But when he does report an event, it is only at our peril that we try to reinterpret it and it will seldom be good method to do so.

These considerations are valid to an even greater degree for the period 479–435. The formal narrative of this period (1.89–118) is set in the framework of the decision of the Spartan Assembly in 432 that the Athenians had broken the Thirty Years' Peace of 446. This decision is to some extent (see p. 371) motivated by Spartan fear of the growing power of the Athenians, since they saw that most of Hellas was already subject to them (1.88). 'This is how the Athenians came to power' (1.89.1), and we are plunged into a fairly detailed narrative of events of 478 and 477 in a style perhaps nearer to story-telling than that in which the war itself is described. When the story reaches 477 and the establishment of the Delian League, we get a more extended second introduction, which begins by saying that his motive for telling the story of the 'Fifty Years' (known to modern scholarship as the *Pentekontaetia*) was to fill a gap left by all his predecessors except Hellanicus, and adds, almost as an afterthought, that the story also demonstrates the growth of Athenian power (1.97.2). There follows a fairly breathless survey of events down to the end of the Samian revolt, notably short, after a reflective passage at 1.99 and a brief comment at 1.103.4, of material to direct the reader's mind in any particular direction, until a resumptive passage at 1.118.1–2 brings us back to the main narrative. This section on the Fifty Years is supplemented by a separate account of the careers of Pausanias and Themistocles (1.128–38), an account very close in style to 1.89–96, which may reasonably be thought to be more vulnerable than normal Thucydidean narrative to suspicions about the nature and value of the underlying evidence.¹¹

The reference to Hellanicus' work could point to a date of composition after 406, since Hellanicus covered events of that year (*FGrH* 323a F 25–6), but need not date more than the sentence in which it appears. Further speculation is inseparably bound up with more general worries about the extent of Thucydides' changes of mind and plan.¹² My own conviction is that there was a relatively late change of plan and that material originally written for other purposes has been incompletely integrated into the work as we have it,¹³ but the methodological principle has to remain unaltered. Even those who suspect that we are dealing with work by Thucydides which is incomplete and insufficiently scrutinized depart at their peril from what we actually have.

¹¹ Rhodes 1970 (C 82); Westlake 1977 (C 108).

¹² See Andrewes, *HCT* v 384–444, and below, p. 372.

¹³ But see Walker 1957 (C 106); Connor 1984 (C 22) 42–7.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SOURCES, CHRONOLOGY, METHOD

7

The work of Diodorus of Agyrium in Sicily (frequently Diodorus Siculus), who was writing in the third quarter of the first century B.C., is a very different matter.¹⁴ He covers the events of this volume, in Books XI. 38–fin., XII–XIII of his *Bibliothēke*. Despite some modern scepticism,¹⁵ the position established by nineteenth-century scholarship¹⁶ still stands, that his basic method was to summarize one previous author at a time, and that for the fifth century that author was Ephorus.¹⁷ Ephorus wrote *kata genos*, one subject at a time, and it is not clear how much chronology he gave and how he organized it. As the work comes through in Diodorus, it has been chopped up into ‘years’ which equate Roman consular-years and Athenian archon-years; in reality, these were never coterminous. The operation was conducted with little care or skill, and the appearance of any event in Diodorus’ main narrative under a particular year is not to be regarded as evidence for its dating.¹⁸ There are items at the end, more rarely at the beginning of years, which are derived from a chronological handbook and are more likely to be reliable. But the danger of trusting Diodorus’ competence can be seen most clearly from the fact that he has read his chronological handbook as dating the reign of Archidamus from 476 to 434 (XI. 48.2, XII. 35.4), but still reports his activity in the early years of the Archidamian War.

Through Diodorus and from other evidence, we can form some judgement of Ephorus of Cyme in Asia Minor, writing a universal history in the third quarter of the fourth century.¹⁹ It is clear that he relied substantially on good earlier sources for our period, successively Herodotus, Thucydides and the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (see below). Sometimes he added from other sources, sometimes he simply reworked the material for his own purposes. These purposes are not easy to see through Diodorus’ perhaps selective treatment of him, and we are, for example, left uncertain whether he attempted a general account of the political events and cultural achievement of the Periclean age. But there is no reason to attribute to him a preference for truth over what was stylistically appropriate and congenial to his own outlook. Sound method will not construe a sentence of Diodorus closely to provide strict evidence, and one should not be too hasty to assume information independent of Thucydides if there is nothing else un-Thucydidean in the context.

¹⁴ On Diodorus in general, see Schwartz 1903 (C 88), Griffith 1968 (C 38) 204–5, 237, J. Hornblower 1981 (C 51) 18–39.

¹⁵ E.g. Laqueur 1958 (C 65); Drews 1962 (C 28); Casevitz 1972 (C 15) xiii–xv.

¹⁶ Volquardsen 1868 (C 103); Holzapfel 1879 (C 49).

¹⁷ For some qualifications about the history of the West, see *CAH* vi², ch. 5.

¹⁸ Modern scholars, nevertheless, particularly for the fourth century, often act on an undeclared principle that Diodorus is right except when he is demonstrably wrong.

¹⁹ On Ephorus in general see Schwartz 1907 (C 89), *FGH* II C 22–35, Barber 1935 (C 9).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

One continuator of Thucydides has already been mentioned, the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*. This work is represented for us by three groups of papyrus fragments, two small, covering various events in 409–407, one large, covering events of 396 and 395.²⁰ The groups cohere in style, in intelligence, and in their obvious relationship to Diodorus. We are dealing with a continuator of Thucydides, presumably starting with the year 411 (with some back-references), writing towards the middle of the fourth century; the terminal date of the work cannot be established. The only author's name which we possess which can be plausibly attached to it is that of the Athenian Cratippus, but even that attribution is not without difficulty.²¹ The importance of the fragments lies not only in their direct contributions, but also in the assurance which they offer that a sober historian lies somewhere behind Diodorus. Much recent work on the late fifth and early fourth centuries has been based on a growing preference for Diodorus over Xenophon.²²

Xenophon's *Hellenica* is the only continuation of Thucydides which survives complete. As we have it, it begins a few weeks after the end of Thucydides' account in 411 and runs down to 362. It is virtually impossible to establish at what stages in Xenophon's life, mostly spent in exile from Athens in the Peloponnese and ending around 350, any given section was written; differences in attitude and style appear to separate, for example, the account of the Peloponnesian War to its end (II.2.23 or II.3.9) from the account of the Thirty at Athens.²³ At times more vivid in detail than Thucydides, the work has had few whole-hearted admirers in recent years, although its faults perhaps arise more from deficiencies of information and intellectual grip than from pro-Spartan bias;²⁴ Xenophon can criticize Sparta and Spartans. The first two books have come down to us with a spurious and inconsistent chronological framework;²⁵ Xenophon's own attempts at chronological accuracy are sporadic and inefficient.

Theopompus of Chios (c. 380–c. 315), a more intelligent, but less

²⁰ The only complete edition is McKechnie and Kern 1988 (C 69). The large London group and the small Florence group are edited by Bartoletti 1959 (C 10), with a commentary by Bruce 1967 (C 14). For the Cairo fragments see Koenen 1976 (C 62).

²¹ The best discussion of authorship (based on the London fragments only) is by Bloch 1940 (C 11). For our direct information about Cratippus, see *FGrH* 64. He surely covered the right material and had an interest in Thucydides. The difficulty about the attribution is that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, though claiming knowledge of Cratippus (*de Thuc.* 16), says that no one after Thucydides wrote by summers and winters (*ibid.* 9 fin.); our author seems to have done this (IX.1).

²² For the fifth century, see Andrewes 1974 (D 2) and 1982 (G 6), Littman 1968 (G 25), Ehrhardt 1970 (G 13). For the beginnings of a reaction see Tuplin 1986 (C 101).

²³ On Xenophon in general, see Breitenbach 1967 (C 13), Anderson 1974 (C 3). Delebecque 1957 (C 25) provides an over-confident attempt to analyse and date the composition of the *Hellenica*. See also Hatzfeld 1930 (C 46), Maclaren 1934 (C 70).

²⁴ Breitenbach 1950 (C 12); Sordi 1950–1 (C 93); Cawkwell 1979 (C 16) 15–46; Montgomery 1965 (C 73). ²⁵ Raubitschek 1973 (C 80) attempts vainly to defend it; see Lotze 1974 (C 67).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

amiable figure, wrote two relevant works.²⁶ The *Hellenica*, a continuation of Thucydides from 411 to 394, is thought to be a relatively youthful work; few fragments survive. We know rather more about two books of his *Philippica*, which covered much of importance for the fifth century, Book x, on the Athenian Demagogues, and Book xxv, on Athenian Lies.²⁷ The second and probably the first were largely polemic in character, and Theopompus clearly took pleasure in saying what might be unusual and unpopular. But he combined learning with an acute appreciation of some types of political reality, and it is regrettable that those authors who have transmitted his fragments had a marked penchant for the sensational. As far as the nature of his narrative in the *Hellenica* is concerned, there is important testimony by Porphyry of Tyre (A.D. 234–c. 302), an excellent judge, that it was heavily dependent on Xenophon, but changed for the worse (*FGrH* 115 F 21).

So far we have been dealing with historians,²⁸ but this is not an appropriate designation for the remaining major source for the fifth century, Plutarch of Chaeronea (A.D. c. 50–c. 120).²⁹ Mistakes can be made if he is taken to be writing history rather than ethical studies of character, for which facts serve as illustrations, but he can allow interest in his story to run away with him. We would be substantially worse off without the one Spartan (*Lysander*) and six Athenian (*Themistocles*, *Aristides*, *Cimon*, *Pericles*, *Nicias*, *Alcibiades*) lives which cover the fifth century, since an enormous body of reading lies behind them; the older fashion for believing that it was not his own reading is in disrepute.³⁰ The *Nicias* indeed is relatively slight, adding not much more than a few comic fragments to a reworking of Thucydides' account, but the rest draw on a large body of material, even to judge by the authors cited by name. These range from intelligent fifth-century sources (Ion of Chios, Critias), through scandal-mongers of the fifth (Stesimbrotus of Thasos) and the late fourth (Idomeneus) centuries, to the fourth-century philosophers, and significant detail is sought from all of them. It is normally harder to determine the source of narrative passages, when the source has not survived. My own inclination is to attach importance to

²⁶ The fragments are collected in *FGrH* 115. On Theopompus in general, see Von Fritz 1941 (c 33), Connor 1967 (c 20), Lane Fox 1986 (c 64). ²⁷ A full treatment in Connor 1968 (c 21).

²⁸ Of those not so far mentioned, Aristodemus (not later than second century A.D.; *FGrH* 104; also *P. Oxy.* xxvii 2469) adds nothing to our knowledge of the Ephorean tradition. The work of Pompeius Trogus (first century B.C.) is potentially more interesting, but the Latin epitome by Justin through which we mainly know it is so incompetently executed as to make certainties hard to find.

²⁹ For Plutarch's historical methods, see Gomme, *HCT* 1 54–84, Stadter 1965 (c 94), Pelling 1980 (c 78). Russell 1963 (c 86) is a particularly valuable study of his dealings with a source we still possess.

³⁰ The classical attempt to establish intermediate sources is Meyer 1899 (A 87) 1–87, but see Theander 1951 (c 99), Hamilton 1969 (c 41) xliii–xlvi, Frost 1980 (c 36) 40–50.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-23347-7 - The Cambridge Ancient History: Second Edition: Volume V: The Fifth Century B.C.

Edited by D. M. Lewis, John Boardman and M. Ostwald

Excerpt

[More information](#)

demonstrable use of Theopompus in the *Pericles*³¹ and to the large number of places in the *Alcibiades* and the *Lysander* where the narrative is visibly closer to that of Xenophon than to that of Diodorus, without being quite the same. On Porphyry's showing, these may well depend on Theopompus, despite Plutarch's suspicions about his attitudes (*Lys.* 30.2).

Plutarch took his material where he found it and as he could use it, and his judgement about the nature and aims of his sources is not impeccable. In the *Pericles* (4.6–6.1), for example, he uses Plato for Pericles' education without noticing the marked irony of the original. On a larger scale, he has to struggle with the disagreement of his sources about Pericles. He solves the trouble that Theopompus thought him a demagogue and Thucydides thought him a great statesman by positing a great change after the ostracism of Thucydides son of Melesias (16.3). He is less happy with the difficulty that, whereas Thucydides thought him a great statesman, everyone else said that he had precipitated an unnecessary and damaging war for personal reasons, and eventually leaves it unresolved. Neither he nor Ephorus before him had the ability to evaluate justly the evidence of Old Comedy and pamphleteers. We should not ourselves be too confident that we fully understand fragments torn from their context.

For the last quarter of the fifth century, the contemporary evidence of comedy and oratory begins to be of value.³² The evaluation of comic evidence is a complex matter, but it is frequently possible to distinguish between a joke or a piece of abuse and the fact which makes the joke or abuse meaningful; Ar. *Knights* 465–9 is not evidence for Cleon's treachery, but it is evidence for negotiations with Argos (see p. 387 below). Similar situations arise in using oratory. One may sometimes have to distinguish between a public fact, which must correspond to something within the jury's knowledge, and the assertion of a private fact, which need not.³³ In general, one should always try to envisage the lost argument of an opponent.

One last literary category remains, that of the *Atthides*, the chronicles devoted to Athenian history.³⁴ Closely related to these is the *Athenian Constitution* of Aristotle.³⁵ The earliest *Atthis*, composed by Hellanicus

³¹ Wade-Gery 1958 (A 121) 233–9.

³² Standing by itself is the Pseudo-Xenophontine *Athenaion Politeia*, sometimes known as 'the Old Oligarch', a short pamphlet, of which the aims and date are disputed. On its aims see, e.g., Gomme 1962 (A 51) 38–69, Lewis 1969 (C 66).

³³ Take, e.g., *Lys.* xx. That Polystratus was elected to office by his fellow-tribesmen (2) is a public fact; that he wrote down nine thousand names (13) is not, but the second statement is normally given more credit than the first. See Andrewes, *HCT* v 204–6 and p. 475 below.

³⁴ On the *Atthides* in general, see Jacoby 1949 (C 57) and *FGrH* III B with commentary.

³⁵ On all matters connected with this work, see Rhodes 1981 (C 83), who does not believe in Aristotelian authorship. There is no doubt that it was written between 335 and 322 and was attributed to Aristotle in antiquity. The present volume will be found to vary in its practice as to how its author is referred to.