

CLAH4005

Chronology

Why is chronology important?

- Chronology can illuminate evolutions, changes and provide the link between what seems disparate events.
- Without a good grasp of chronology, it is very difficult to answer any questions that are not descriptive of events, but rather consider the reasons for them.

Chronology and accuracy

- All chronology of the ancient world is essentially estimated.
- However, that does not mean that we can ignore it.
- We have enough specifically dated events, and many more that we can pinpoint to a certain span of time, to provide us with a spine of chronological evolution.

Two types of chronological investigation

1. The sequence of events
2. The combination of events

Sequence of events

- A sequence of events relating to a specific subject can provide information as to evolution and change.
- For example: Athenian imperialism: looking at Athens in the early part of the Pentekontaetia
- Formation of Delian League
- Taking over and colonising Skyros
- Taking over and colonising Eion
- Revolt of Naxos
- Battle of Eurymedon
- Thasian revolt
- First Peloponnesian War

Combination of events

Athens

- Formation of Delian League
- Taking over and colonising Skyros
- Taking over and colonising Eion
- Revolt of Naxos
- Battle of Eurymedon
- Thasian revolt
- First Peloponnesian War

Sparta

- Pausanias recalled
- Breaking up of Hellenic League
- Hetoimaridas debate
- Earthquake
- Helot revolt
- First Peloponnesian War

The issue of precise chronology

- While simple sequences of events can be studied without a precise chronology at times, combinations cannot.
- Even in simple sequences of events, precise chronology is necessary in order to provide an understanding of the passing of time and its influence on events.

The problem of linear understanding

- We have a tendency to look at chronology in a linear fashion
- This means that we tend to concentrate on a specific sequence without considering other influences on events.
- For example: looking at the Second Athenian League without a consideration of the history of Macedon in the same period, means that we are missing important insights into the issues that brought about the Social War

The spider web

- History is not a linear development; it is essentially a spider web of events.
- In order to achieve a fuller understanding we need to be able to consider what is happening in different (but connected) geographical regions.

The immediate aftermath of the Sicilian Expedition

- When the news was brought to Athens, for a long while they disbelieved even the most respectable of the soldiers who had themselves escaped from the scene of action and clearly reported the matter, a destruction so complete not being thought credible. When the conviction was forced upon them, they were angry with the orators who had joined in promoting the expedition, just as if they had not themselves voted it, and were enraged also with the reciters of oracles and soothsayers, and all other omenmongers of the time who had encouraged them to hope that they should conquer Sicily. [2] **Already distressed at all points and in all quarters, after what had now happened, they were seized by a fear and consternation quite without example.** It was grievous enough for the state and for every man in his proper person to lose so many heavy infantry, cavalry, and able-bodied troops, and to see none left to replace them; but when they saw, also, that they had not sufficient ships in their docks, or money in the treasury, or crews for the ships, they began to despair of salvation. **They thought that their enemies in Sicily would immediately sail with their fleet against Piraeus, inflamed by so signal a victory;** while their adversaries at home, redoubling all their preparations, would vigorously attack them by sea and land at once, aided by their own revolted confederates. [3] Nevertheless, with such means as they had, it was determined to resist to the last, and to provide timber and money, and to equip a fleet as they best could, to take steps to secure their confederates and above all Euboea, to reform things in the city upon a more economical footing, and to elect a board of elders to advise upon the state of affairs as occasion should arise. Thucydides 8.1

Why did the Athenian prediction not come true?

415
Athenian
invasion

412 Victory
against Athens

C411
Internal
Revolution
At Syracuse

409 onwards
Carthaginian
Invasion of
Sicily

416
Melian
Dialogue

415
Sicilian
Expedition
starts

412
Sicilian
Disaster

410
Battle
of Kyzikos