

Between Narrative and Interpretation: Writing History in the Ancient World

Unit 5: Universal and Local history

The standard type of narrative in the historians of the classical period, as well as later specimens of Greek historiography, is the narrative of a specific period in time. Yet while the three main surviving historians of this period, Herodotos, Thucydides and Xenophon, wrote that type of narrative, other types of narrative historiography were also present, both in the classical period and later. In this unit, the other types of historiography are discussed. On the one edge of the spectrum are local histories, particularly the *Atthides*, and on the other, universal history, in its most extreme Greek example, Diodoros of Sicily.

Diodoros and Universal History

Diodoros of Sicily, or Diodorus Siculus as he is commonly called, lived and wrote in the first century BCE. He lived in turbulent times as the Republic fell and the Civil Wars were in full swing. The dates of his birth and death are unknown even approximately. He certainly visited Egypt to consult the library of Alexandria c60-56 BCE. After his extensive visit to Egypt, Diodoros moved to Rome where he completed his work around 30 BCE.

The *Bibliothèque* of Diodoros is the most extensive historical work surviving from Greek antiquity. It had 40 books of which 15 survive as well as fragments of others. He is particularly useful for the history of classical period, when most of the surviving books concentrate, as well as for his account of myths in the first 6 books of the *Bibliothèque*. Specifically for the years between the ascension of Philip II of Macedon and the battle of Ipsos in 301 BCE, Diodoros is invaluable, since he provides the only full account of the events of this important period.

Diodoros begins his work with one of the most powerful statements in the history of historiography: “The writers of universal history bring great good to all people, since they are willing through their own toil to help the common good” (Diodoros 1.1.1. Translation: E. Bissa). Diodoros does not refer to history in general but particularly to universal history, which at the time was not a new phenomenon but had not yet reached its apogee; that was to come with the historians of the Augustan period. Yet, Diodoros marks an important milestone in the evolution of the genre, since he is the first writer of holistic universal history; he believes that he is the first truly universal historian. In the opening of the *Bibliothēke*, Diodoros relates his vision and his aim to the reader: a scope of historical inquiry so vast that his claim of being the first to attempt it seems fully justified.

[1] It is fitting that all men should ever accord great gratitude to those writers who have composed universal histories since they have aspired to help by their individual labours human society as a whole; for by offering a schooling, which entails no danger, in what is advantageous they provide their readers, through such a presentation of events, with a most excellent kind of experience. For although the learning which is acquired by experience in each separate case, with all the attendant toils and dangers, does indeed enable a man to discern in each instance where utility lies – and this is the reason why the most widely experiences of our heroes suffered great misfortunes before he “of many men the cities saw and learned their thoughts” (Homer *Odyssey* 1.3); - yet the understanding of the failures and successes of other men, which is acquired by the study of history, affords a schooling that is free from actual experience of ills. Furthermore, it has been the aspiration of these writers to marshal all men, who, although united one to another by their kinship, are yet separated by space and time, into one and the same orderly body. And such historians have therein shown themselves to be, as it were, ministers of Divine Providence (theia pronoia). For just as Providence, having brought the orderly arrangement of the visible stars and the natures of men together into one common relationship, continually directs their courses through all eternity, apportioning to each that which falls to it by the direction of fate, so likewise the historians, in recording the common affairs of the inhabited world as though they were those of single state, have made of their treatises a single reckoning of past events and a common clearinghouse of knowledge concerning them. For it is an excellent thing to be able to use the ignorant mistakes of others as warning examples for the correction of error, and, when we confront the varied vicissitudes of life, instead of having to investigate what is being done now, to be able to imitate the successes which have been achieved in the past. Certainly all men prefer

in the counsels the oldest men to those who are younger, because of the experience which has accrued to the former through the lapse of time; but it is a fact that such experience is in so far surpassed by the understanding which is gained from history, as history excels, we know, in the multitude of facts at its disposal. For this reason one may hold that the acquisition of a knowledge of history is of the greatest utility for every conceivable circumstance of life. For it endows the young with the wisdom of the aged, while for the old it multiplies the experience which they already possess; citizens in private station it qualifies for leadership, and the leaders it incites, through the immortality of the glory which it confers, to undertake the noblest deeds; soldiers, again, it makes more ready to face dangers in defence of their country because of the public encomiums which they will receive after death, and wicked men it turns aside from their impulse towards evil through the everlasting opprobrium to which it will condemn them. Diodoros *Bibliothēke* 1.1

Translation: Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes with an English Translation by C. H. Oldfather. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1989.

Consequently we, observing that writers of history are accorded a merited approbation, were led to feel a like enthusiasm for the subject. But when we turned our attention to the historians before our time, although we approved their purpose without reservation, yet we were far from feeling that their treatises had been composed so as to contribute to human welfare as much as might have been the case. For although the profit which history affords its readers lies in its embracing a vast number and variety of circumstances, yet most writers have recorded no more than isolated wars waged by a single nation or a single state, and but few have undertaken, beginning with the earliest times and coming down to their own day, to record the events connected with all peoples and of the latter, some have not attached to the several events their own proper dates and others have passed over the deeds of barbarian peoples; and some, again, have rejected the ancient legends because of the difficulties involved in their treatment, while others have failed to complete the plan to which they had set their hand, their lives having been cut short by fate. And of those who have undertaken this account of all peoples not one has continued his history beyond the Macedonian period. For while some have closed their accounts with the deeds of Philip, other with those of Alexander and some with the diadochoi or the epigonoi, yet, despite the number and importance of the events subsequent to these and extending even to our own lifetime which have been left neglected, no historian has essayed to treat of them within the compass of a single narrative because of the magnitude of the undertaking. For this reason, since both the dates of the events and the events themselves lie scattered about in numerous treatises and

in divers authors, the knowledge of them becomes difficult for the mind to encompass and for the memory to retain. Consequently, after we had examined the composition of each of these authors' works, we resolved to write a history after a plan which might yield to its readers the greatest benefit and at the same time incommode them the least. For if a man should begin with the most ancient times and record to the best of his ability the affairs of the entire world down to his own day, so far as they have been handed down to memory, as though they were the affairs of some single city, he would obviously have to undertake an immense labour, yet he would have composed a treatise of the utmost value to those who are studiously inclined. Diodoros 1.3

Translation: Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes with an English Translation by C. H. Oldfather. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1989.

Polybios is the first of the extant historians to claim that his work is a universal history:

There is this analogy between the plan of my History and the marvellous spirit of the age with which I have to deal. Just as Fortune made almost all the affairs of the world incline in one direction, and forced them to converge upon one and the same point; so it is my task as an historian to put before my readers a compendious view of the part played by Fortune in bringing about the general catastrophe. It was this peculiarity which originally challenged my attention, and determined me on undertaking this work. And combined with this was the fact that no writer of our time has undertaken a general history. Had any one done so my ambition in this direction would have been much diminished. But, in point of fact, I notice that by far the greater number of historians concern themselves with isolated wars and the incidents that accompany them: while as to a general and comprehensive scheme of events, their date, origin, and catastrophe, no one as far as I know has undertaken to examine it. I thought it, therefore, distinctly my duty neither to pass by myself, nor allow any one else to pass by, without full study, a characteristic specimen of the dealings of Fortune at once brilliant and instructive in the highest degree. For fruitful as Fortune is in change, and constantly as she is producing dramas in the life of men, yet never assuredly before this did she work such a marvel, or act such a drama, as that which we have witnessed. And of this we cannot obtain a comprehensive view from writers of mere episodes. It would be as absurd to expect to do so as for a man to imagine that he has learnt the shape of the whole world, its entire arrangement and order, because he has visited one after the other the most famous cities in it; or perhaps merely examined them in separate pictures. That would be indeed absurd: and it has always seemed to me that men, who are persuaded that they get a competent view of universal from episodic history, are very like

persons who should see the limbs of some body, which had once been living and beautiful, scattered and remote; and should imagine that to be quite as good as actually beholding the activity and beauty of the living creature itself. But if some one could there and then reconstruct the animal once more, in the perfection of its beauty and the charm of its vitality, and could display it to the same people, they would beyond doubt confess that they had been far from conceiving the truth, and had been little better than dreamers. For indeed some idea of a whole may be got from a part, but an accurate knowledge and clear comprehension cannot. Wherefore we must conclude that episodic history contributes exceedingly little to the familiar knowledge and secure grasp of universal history. While it is only by the combination and comparison of the separate parts of the whole,--by observing their likeness and their difference,--that a man can attain his object: can obtain a view at once clear and complete; and thus secure both the profit and the delight of History. Polybios 1.4

Translation: Histories. Polybios. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. translator. London, New York. Macmillan. 1889. Reprint Bloomington 1962. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plb.+1.4>).

For Polybios, universal means the history of the recent past and his own times, albeit from a pan-Mediterranean perspective created by the unification of the region affected by Roman conquest:

My History begins in the 140th Olympiad. The events from which it starts are these. In Greece, what is called the Social war: the first waged by Philip, son of Demetrius and father of Perseus, in league with the Achaeans against the Aetolians. In Asia, the war for the possession of Coele-Syria which Antiochus and Ptolemy Philopator carried on against each other. In Italy, Libya, and their neighbourhood, the conflict between Rome and Carthage, generally called the Hannibalian war. My work thus begins where that of Aratus of Sicyon leaves off. Now up to this time the world's history had been, so to speak, a series of disconnected transactions, as widely separated in their origin and results as in their localities. But from this time forth History becomes a connected whole: the affairs of Italy and Libya are involved with those of Asia and Greece, and the tendency of all is to unity. This is why I have fixed upon this era as the starting-point of my work. For it was their victory over the Carthaginians in this war, and their conviction that thereby the most difficult and most essential step towards universal empire had been taken, which encouraged the Romans for the first time to stretch out their hands upon the rest, and to cross with an army into Greece and Asia. Now, had the states that were rivals for universal empire been familiarly known to us, no reference perhaps to their previous history would have been necessary,

to show the purpose and the forces with which they approached an undertaking of this nature and magnitude. But the fact is that the majority of the Greeks have no knowledge of the previous constitution, power, or achievements either of Rome or Carthage. I therefore concluded that it was necessary to prefix this and the next book to my History. I was anxious that no one, when fairly embarked upon my actual narrative, should feel at a loss, and have to ask what were the designs entertained by the Romans, or the forces and means at their disposal, that they entered upon those undertakings, which did in fact lead to their becoming masters of land and sea everywhere in our part of the world. I wished, on the contrary, that these books of mine, and the prefatory sketch which they contained, might make it clear that the resources they started with justified their original idea, and sufficiently explained their final success in grasping universal empire and dominion. Polybios 1.3

Translation: Histories. Polybius. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. translator. London, New York. Macmillan. 1889. Reprint Bloomington 1962. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plb.+1.3>).

Diodoros' perspective of a holistic universal history would be, as Momigliano rightly noted, "alien" to Polybios (Momigliano, A. (1982) 'The origins of Universal history' *ASNP* 12, 542). More importantly, Polybios has a definite aim: to explain the momentous and rapid rise of Rome, which as he rightly says was "unprecedented":

Had the praise of History been passed over by former Chroniclers it would perhaps have been incumbent upon me to urge the choice and special study of records of this sort, as the readiest means men can have of correcting their knowledge of the past. But my predecessors have not been sparing in this respect. They have all begun and ended, so to speak, by enlarging on this theme: asserting again and again that the study of History is in the truest sense an education, and a training for political life; and that the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others. It is evident, therefore, that no one need think it his duty to repeat what has been said by many, and said well. Least of all myself: for the surprising nature of the events which I have undertaken to relate is in itself sufficient to challenge and stimulate the attention of every one, old or young, to the study of my work. Can any one be so indifferent or idle as not to care to know by what means, and under what kind of polity, almost the whole inhabited world was conquered and brought under the dominion of the single city of Rome, and that too within a period of not quite fifty-three years? Or who again can be so completely absorbed in other subjects of contemplation or study, as to think

any of them superior in importance to the accurate understanding of an event **for which the past affords no precedent.** Polybios 1.1

Translation: Histories. Polybius. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. translator. London, New York. Macmillan. 1889. Reprint Bloomington 1962. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plb.+1.1>).

Consequently, his focus is on political events and their connections, since to Polybios there lays the key to achieving his aim:

Seeing that many writers have discussed in many varieties of style the question of genealogies, myths, and colonisations, as well as of the foundations of cities and the consanguinity of peoples, there was nothing left for a writer at this date but to copy the words of others and claim them as his own,--than which nothing could be more dishonourable; or, if he did not choose to do that, to absolutely waste his labour, being obliged to acknowledge that he is composing a history and bestowing thought on what has already been sufficiently set forth and transmitted to posterity by his predecessors. For these and sundry other reasons I abandoned such themes as these, and determined on writing a history of actions: first, because they are continually new and require a new narrative, --as of course one generation cannot give us the history of the next; and secondly, because such a narrative is of all others the most instructive. This it has always been: but it is eminently so now, because the arts and sciences have made such an advance in our day, that students are able to arrange every event as it happens according to fixed rules, as it were, of scientific classification. Therefore, as I did not aim so much at giving pleasure to my readers, as at profiting those who apply to such studies, I omitted all other themes and devoted myself wholly to this. But on these points, those who give a careful attention to my narrative will be the best witnesses to the truth of what I say. . . . Polybios 9.2

Translation: Histories. Polybius. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. translator. London, New York. Macmillan. 1889. Reprint Bloomington 1962. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plb.+9.2>).

Thus, his history is an account of causality and its implications. In that, he follows the vision of another famous exile: Thucydides, the first pragmatic historian, who also sought to explain another unprecedented event.

Diodoros has a different perspective, both on what universal history is and what its uses are. Diodoran universal history is the history of mankind and the main actors are not

events and causality but people. The stage, temporal and spatial, is wider than Polybios', since for Diodoros it is the *oikoumene* that provides the spatial setting and all time the temporal. The focus of Diodoros on people rather than on events is obvious in his vision of the purpose of universal history: it is a teacher, a moralising force for the betterment of mankind, not merely an explanatory tool for current political circumstances:

[4.1.1] I am not unaware of the fact that those who compile the narratives of ancient mythology labour under many disadvantages in their composition. For, in the first place, the antiquity of the events they have to record, since it makes record difficult, is a cause of much perplexity to those who would compose an account of them; and again, inasmuch as any pronouncement they may make of the dates of events does not admit of the strictest kind of proof or disproof, a feeling of contempt for the narration is aroused in the mind of those who read it; furthermore, the variety and the multitude of the heroes, demi-gods, and men in general whose genealogies must be set down make their recital a difficult thing to achieve; but the greatest and most disconcerting obstacle of all consists in the fact that those who have recorded the deeds and myths of the earliest times are in disagreement among themselves. [4.1.2] For these reasons the writers of greatest reputation among the later historians have stood aloof from the narration of ancient mythology because of its difficulty, and have undertaken to record only the more recent events. [4.1.3] Ephorus of Cymê, for instance, a pupil of Isocrates, when he undertook to write his universal history, passed over the tales of the old mythology and commenced his history with a narration of the events which took place after the Return of the Heracleidae. Likewise Callisthenes and Theopompus, who were contemporaries of Ephorus, held aloof from the old myths. [4.1.4] We, however, holding the opposite opinion to theirs, have shouldered the labour which such a record involves and have expended all the care within our power upon the ancient legends. For very great and most numerous deeds have been performed by the heroes and demi-gods and by many good men likewise, who, because of the benefits they conferred which have been shared by all men, have been honoured by succeeding generation with sacrifices which in some cases are like those offered to the gods, in other cases like such as are paid to heroes, and of one and all the appropriate praises have been sung by the voice of history for all time. Diodoros 4.1.1-4

Translation: Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History* (Books III - VIII). Translated by Oldfather, C. H. Loeb Classical Library Volumes 303 and 340. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1935. (Theoi: <http://www.theoi.com/Text/DiodorusSiculus4A.html>).

Unlike Polybios, who follows closely the Thucydidean model of kinetic history, Diodoros does not follow a specific model of static or kinetic but prefers a blending of the two in a vision of history that places man in the centre of the stage and events become his expression (On this see further Oswyn Murray “Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture” *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Nov., 1972), pp. 200-213 JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638201>).

Further, Diodoros’ methodology differs sharply from that of his extant predecessors, although it probably had precedents in the lost historians of the fourth century and the Hellenistic period. Inquiry and memory, the main tools of Herodotos, Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybios, are dismissed as inappropriate for the scope of Diodoros’ work. Diodoros is the first surviving *scholar* in Hellenic historiography; his research is not done on the battlefield or the interview room but in the library. The scholar from Sicily is the first extant historian in the modern sense of the word, where the researcher relies on documentary sources:

And so we, appreciating that an undertaking of this nature, while most useful, would yet require much labour and time, have been engaged upon it for thirty years, and with much hardship and many dangers we have visited a large portion of both Asia and Europe that we might see with our own eyes all the most important regions and as many others as possible; for many errors have been committed through ignorance of the sites, not only by the common run of historians, but even by some of the highest reputation. As for the resources which have availed us in this undertaking, they have been, first and foremost, that enthusiasm for the work which enables every man to bring to completion the task which seems impossible, and, in the second place, the abundant supply which Rome affords of the materials pertaining to the proposed study. For the supremacy of this city, a supremacy so powerful that it extends to the bounds of the inhabited world, has provided us in the course of our long residence there with copious resources in the most accessible form. For since the city of our origin was Agyrium in Sicily, and by reason of our contact with the Romans in that island we had gained a wide acquaintance with their language, we have acquired an accurate knowledge of all the events connected with this empire from the records which have been carefully preserved among them over a long period of time. Diodoros 1.4

Translation: Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*. Translated by Oldfather, C. H. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1935.

Diodoros' method strikes too close to home for comfort; he is not an actor nor does he entertain delusions of action. Diodoros prefers the passive role of the scholar who is active only intellectually and seeks patterns and their exegesis. He sets himself up not as the gifted amateur or the interested gentleman but as the hard-working, and possibly mediocre, professional. For his candid admission of scholarly passivity and the honesty of actually trusting his sources, Diodoros is relegated by his modern counterparts from the premiership of historians to the championship of compilers, if not the amateur league of copyists. The damnation of Diodoros the historian and the sneers towards the inept and mindless compiler have spanned more than a century of modern scholarship, from Volquardsen's seminal monograph to his most recent commentator.

To provide a few examples only:

Wilamowitz, U. (1908, Oxford) *Greek Historical Writing and Apollo*, p.14: "Diodoros made extracts from Ephorus, nothing further".

Cawkwell, G. (1981) 'The King's Peace' *Classical Quarterly* 31, 69: "If we did not have the reflection of Ephoros in Diodoros, albeit a mirror cracked and blemished, we would be sadly astray in 374 and 371".

Hornblower, H. (1981, Oxford) *Hieronymus of Cardia*, p. 27: "Diodoros succeeded neither as an original historian nor as a conscientious compiler".

Andrewes, A. (1985) 'Diodoros and Ephoros: one source of confusion' in Eadie, J.W. & Ober, J. (Lanham, 1985) (eds) *The Craft of the Ancient Historian*, p. 190: "First, there has been some tendency lately to reject the view that most of Diodoran prefaces are merely cribbed from Ephoros and to credit him with a capacity to churn out moral and other comment for himself".

Stylianou, P.J. (1991) 'Review of Sacks, K. Diodoros Siculus and the First Century' *BMCR*: "Diodoros is no historian but an incompetent compiler", "the pattern Sacks thinks he can discern in the Bibliothek...is simply too subtle and intricate for someone like Diodoros".

The most recent and possibly most damning testimony is that of Stylianos (Stylianos, P.J. (1998, Oxford) *Historical Commentary to Diodoros Book 15*), for example (p.132) “That the *Bibliothēke* is so obviously a work of compilation, one hastily and incompetently carried out, can be illustrated abundantly”.

Undeniably, Diodoros used documentary sources; a necessity for this type of universal history. In the few instances where how Diodoros follows the works of earlier historians can be observed and ascertained, it is obvious that he follows them closely. Such close attention to his sources should be regarded with admiration and relief, not scorn, since otherwise Diodoros’ value would be greatly diminished. In this issue Diodoros’ value is not as “one of the most eligible subjects for the operations of *Quellenforschung*”, as Hornblower called him, but rather the value of a historian who does not depart from his evidence into wild rides of fancy.

The *Bibliothēke* constantly exhibits Diodoros’ own perspective, ideas and exegesis of patterns. As Kenneth Sacks rightly argued: “once the belief in Diodoros’ incompetence is put aside, it is easy to establish his authorship of important concepts in the *Bibliothēke*” (Sacks, K. (1994) ‘Diodoros and his Sources: Conformity and Creativity’ in Hornblower, S. *Greek Historiography* (Oxford), p.214). His interest in mythology and his criticism of his predecessors who rejected it as the exclusive province of mythographers is a telling example, backed up by six books on the subject. His ethnographic perspective, which he blends with his account of mythological and historical events, and his interest in social circumstances create the sense of a purely Diodoran view of universal historiography, which ties in closely with the ideas expressed in the *proemion*. Further, his comments, judgements and treatment of some subjects are beyond what is seen in his extant predecessors and can be adduced from the fragments of the lost ones.

Suggested Reading:

1. Drews Robert ‘Diodorus and His Sources’ *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 83, No. 4. (Oct.,1962), pp. 383-392. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/292920>

2. Ehrhardt Christopher 'Xenophon and Diodorus on Aegospotami' *Phoenix*, Vol. 24, No. 3. (Autumn, 1970), pp. 225-228. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1087242>
3. Gray V. J. 'The Years 375 to 371 BC: A Case Study in the Reliability of Diodorus Siculus and Xenophon' *The Classical Quarterly, New Series*, Vol. 30, No. 2. (1980), pp. 306-326. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638502>
4. Pesely George E. 'The Speech of Endius in Diodorus Siculus 13. 52. 3-8' *Classical Philology*, Vol. 80, No. 4. (Oct., 1985), pp.320-321. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/269616>
5. Rubincam Catherine 'Did Diodorus Siculus Take over Cross-References from His Sources?' *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 119, No. 1.(Spring, 1998), pp. 67-87. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1562067>
6. Toher Mark 'Diodoros on Delion and Euripides' *Supplices* *The Classical Quarterly, New Series*, Vol. 51, No. 1.(2001), pp. 178-182. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3556339>

Short Assignment: Is Diodoros a universal historian and is he the first “true” universal historian?

The Local Histories

Local history was a large genre in the ancient world but one that did not weather well the centuries since the end of antiquity. To the best of our knowledge there were local histories for most of the major poleis in the Greek world and some of the smaller ones. Of particular importance and volume among these local histories, or local chronicles as they are more generally called, are the *Atthides*, or local chronicles of Athens and Attika.

The first problem one encounters in relation to this genre of historiography is similar to that we encountered in the first unit relating to pre-Herodotean accounts. *Atthidography* is a lost genre of historiography with only fragments surviving. Consequently, any discussion is speculative and greatly influenced by the surviving fragments, which may

not be representative of the actual works. Further, any discussion is bound to be influenced to an extent by the pseudo-Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Aristot.+Ath.+Pol.+fragments>) that uses information from the *Atthides* for its historical section (1-41).

Atthidography encompasses different types of historical, semi-historical and mythological account. The purpose of the individual works was to provide a history of Athens and Attika from its earliest beginnings to the time the author was writing. The exact format of the *Atthides* is generally agreed, based on the fragments and the testimony of later authors, to have been chronographic. In other words, the authors arranged their material chronologically, by king and generation for the mythological period and by archon for the archaic and classical periods.

I begin my history, then, with the most ancient legends, which the historians before me have omitted as a subject difficult to be cleared up with diligent study; 2 and I bring the narrative down to the beginning of the First Punic War, which fell in the third year of the one hundred and twenty-eighth Olympiad. I relate all the foreign wars that the city waged during that period and all the internal seditions with which she was agitated, p27showing from what causes they sprang and by what methods and by what arguments they were brought to an end. I give an account also of all the forms of government Rome used, both during the monarchy and after its overthrow, and show what was the character of each. I describe the best customs and the most remarkable laws; and, in short, I show the whole life of the ancient Romans. 3 As to the form I give this work, it does not resemble that which the authors who make wars alone their subject have given to their histories, nor that which others who treat of the several forms of government by themselves have adopted, nor is it like the annalistic accounts which the authors of *Atthides* have published (for these are monotonous and soon grow tedious to the reader), but it is a combination of every kind, forensic, speculative and narrative, to the intent that it may afford satisfaction both to those who occupy themselves with political debates and to those who are devoted to philosophical speculations, as well as to any who may desire mere undisturbed entertainment in their reading of history. 4 Such things, therefore, will be the subjects of my history and such will be its form. I, the author, am Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the son of Alexander. And at this point I begin. Dionysios of Halikarnassos *Roman Antiquities* 1.8

Translation: The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus published in Vol. I of the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1937. (Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus/1A*.html).

Son of Kyknos, Athenian, prophet and diviner; he had as his wife Archestrate. The birth of Philochoros took place in the time of Eratosthenes, as one may realize from the fact that he was a young man to Eratosthenes' old man.[1] He died after being ambushed by Antigonos[2] because he had been attacked for inclining towards the kingdom of Ptolemy.[3] He wrote seventeen books of Atthis;[4] it contains the deeds of [the] Athenians plus kings and archons down to the last Antiochos, the one surnamed Theos.[5] It is in response to Demon.[6] [In all, he wrote] On the Art of Prophecy; On Sacrifices (one book); On the Tetrapolis;[7] Foundation of Salamis; Attic Inscriptions; On the Festivals at Athens (seventeen books); On those who have been Archons[8] at Athens from Sokratides as far as Apollodoros;[9] Olympiads (in two books);[10] Atthis in Reply to Demon; Summary of the same Atthis; Summary of the Activity of Dionysios on Sacred Matters;[11] On Sophokles' Stories (five books); On Euripides; On Alkman;[12] On The Mysteries at Athens; Collection of Heroines or Pythagorean Women; Delian Matters (two books); On Discoveries; On Purifications; On Contracts. Suda, s.v. Philochoros (phi,441).

Translation: Graham Shipley (Suda Online: <http://www.stoa.org/sol/>)

This arrangement has earned the Atthides the label of “chronicles”, although they must in no way be confused with Byzantine chronography, especially in matter of format. Where a large part of the Byzantine tradition of chronicle writing is in entries and what would appear to the modern reader as “note” format, the Atthides appear, from the evidence of the surviving fragments, to have been written in clear continuous prose, similar to any historical work of the same period.

It is important to note here that the Atthides combined mythology and what today would be termed cultural history with accounts of actual historical events. Since many of the surviving fragments relate to the myths of Athens and Attika, as well as to local customs, traditions and geography, it is easy to dismiss the genre as unhistorical. Yet, although the Atthides made great use of oral tradition for their ethnographical, mythological and cultural material, they also made use of documentary evidence as well as eye-witness testimony and the author's autopsy for their account of historical events.

The first Atthidographer was Hellanikos of Lesbos in the fifth century, although some ancient sources did not consider him to be so giving the title to the later Atthidographer, Kleidemos.

I myself put the blame on rogues and thieves. But Cleitodemus, the oldest writer to describe the customs of the Athenians, says in his account of Attica that when the Athenians were preparing the Sicilian expedition a vast flock of crows swooped on Delphi, pecked this image all over, and with their beaks tore away its gold. He says that the crows also broke off the spear, the owls, and the imitation fruit on the palm-tree. Pausanias 10.15.5

Translation: Pausanias. Pausanias Description of Greece with an English Translation by W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod, M.A., in 4 Volumes. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1918. [Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Paus.+10.15.1>]

It is of particular interest that the first known local chronicler of Attika was a non-Athenian. Hellanikos was a very important figure in the development of historiography. He wrote several works on mythology as well as several local histories in addition to his Atthis. More importantly his was the first concentrated attempt to devise a chronological framework for the accounting of Greek history. Every Greek polis had its own calendar and generally its own counting of years according to the chief magistrate (on this see, OCD, s.v. calendar, Greek: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t111.e1259>). No single calendar system existed for the Greek world and thus the reckoning of events was hampered by the lack of a common precise chronological framework. Hellanikos was the first to try to establish a common chronological framework advocating the use of victor lists and major magistrates in important cities, such as the Priestesses of Argos. Hellanikos' system was used by later authors, as well as his contemporary Thucydides:

The thirty years' truce which was entered into after the conquest of Euboea lasted fourteen years. **In the fifteenth, in the forty-eighth year of the priestess-ship of Chrysis at Argos, in the Ephorate of Aenesias at Sparta, in the last month but two of the Archonship of Pythodorus at Athens,** and six months after the battle of Potidaea, just at the beginning of spring, a Theban force a little over three hundred strong, under the command of their

Boeotarchs, Pythangelus, son of Phyleides, and Diemporus, son of Onetorides, about the first watch of the night, made an armed entry into Plataea, a town of Boeotia in alliance with Athens. [2] The gates were opened to them by a Plataean called Naucleides, who, with his party, had invited them in, meaning to put to death the citizens of the opposite party, bring over the city to Thebes, and thus obtain power for themselves. [3] This was arranged through Eurymachus, son of Leontiades, a person of great influence at Thebes. For Plataea had always been at variance with Thebes; and the latter, foreseeing that war was at hand, wished to surprise her old enemy in time of peace, before hostilities had actually broken out. Indeed this was how they got in so easily without being observed, as no guard had been posted. [4] After the soldiers had grounded arms in the marketplace, those who had invited them in wished them to set to work at once and go to their enemies' houses. This, however, the Thebans refused to do, but determined to make a conciliatory proclamation, and if possible to come to a friendly understanding with the citizens. Their herald accordingly invited any who wished to resume their old place in the confederacy of their countrymen to ground arms with them, for they thought that in this way the city would readily join them. Thucydides 2.2.1

Translation: Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War. London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Thuc.+2.2.1>).

The same summer the Thebans dismantled the wall of the Thespians on the charge of Atticism, having always wished to do so, and now finding it an easy matter, as the flower of the Thespian youth had perished in the battle with the Athenians. [2] The same summer also the temple of Hera at Argos was burnt down, through Chrysis, the priestess, placing a lighted torch near the garlands and then falling asleep, so that they all caught fire and were in a blaze before she observed it. [3] Chrysis that very night fled to Phlius for fear of the Argives, who, agreeably to the law in such a case, appointed another priestess named Phaeinis. Chrysis at the time of her flight had been priestess for eight years of the present war and half the ninth. [4] At the close of the summer the investment of Scione was completed, and the Athenians, leaving a detachment to maintain the blockade, returned with the rest of their army. Thucydides 4.133

Translation: Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War. London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Thuc.+4.133.1>).

Hellanikos probably used his extensive experience in writing local histories and organising, chronologically and thematically, mythological and semi-historical material

when writing his *Atthis*. He certainly covered the history of the fifth century, including the Athenian Empire, as his account of the *Pentekontaetia* (OCD, s.v. *Pentekontaetia*: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t111.e4848>) was criticized by Thucydides.

Their supremacy commenced with independent allies who acted on the resolutions of a common congress. It was marked by the following undertakings in war and in administration during the interval between the Median and the present war, against the barbarian, against their own rebel allies, and against the Peloponnesian powers which would come in contact with them on various occasions. [2] My excuse for relating these events, and for venturing on this digression, is that this passage of history has been omitted by all my predecessors, who have confined themselves either to Hellenic history before the Median war, or to the Median war itself. **Hellanicus, it is true, did touch on these events in his Athenian history; but he is somewhat concise and not accurate in his dates. Besides, the history of these events contains an explanation of the growth of the Athenian empire.** Thucydides 1.97

Translation: Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910. (Perseus DL: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Thuc.+1.97.1>).

The genre found particular prominence in the fourth century BCE with the *Atthides* of Kleidemos, Androtion, Phanodemos and Melanthios. The most important of these was Androtion. Androtion was a wealthy Athenian politician, particularly prominent in the period of the Social War. We know quite a bit about his career from a speech against him by Demosthenes (Demosthenes 22: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Dem.+22+1>) as well as by surviving inscriptions of decrees that he proposed. Like the historian Ephoros, Androtion was a student of Isokrates. He probably wrote his *Atthis* in Megara, where he was exiled at the end of his life. The main characteristic of Androtion's work was his detailed account of the events of the recent past and those that occurred during his lifetime. Of the eight books of his *Atthis*, five appear to have been devoted to the years 404-340 BCE. Androtion's work was certainly influential and was used both by Philochoros and the author of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Athēnaion Politeia*.

Phanodemos was another Atthidographer of the fourth century BCE. Like Androtion, he also took part in public life but in spite of his connection with Lykourgos and, probably, the anti-Macedonian party, he appears to have been more interested in cultic and religious matters than politics. Only 27 fragments of his Atthis survive but it appears that he paid little attention to historical times or contemporary events, preferring instead to concentrate on the mythology and early history of Athens. Possibly he intended to supplement Androtion's Atthis, which was so centred on contemporary history. However, Phanodemos appears to have been a staunch patriot to the extent that he either recorded local Atheno-centric versions of myths that contradict the general information provided by the epic cycles or he actively changed myth to fit an Athenocentric perspective.

The greatest and most influential Atthidographer was Philochoros, who lived and wrote in the third century BCE. Like Androtion, Philochoros was active in politics until his death by execution at the order of Antigonos Gonatas for his support of Ptolemy Philadelphos.

Philochoros was a very active writer, as testified by his Suda entry:

Son of Kyknos, Athenian, prophet and diviner; he had as his wife Archestrata. The birth of Philochoros took place in the time of Eratosthenes, as one may realize from the fact that he was a young man to Eratosthenes' old man.[1] He died after being ambushed by Antigonos[2] because he had been attacked for inclining towards the kingdom of Ptolemy.[3] He wrote seventeen books of Atthis;[4] it contains the deeds of [the] Athenians plus kings and archons down to the last Antiochos, the one surnamed Theos.[5] It is in response to Demon.[6] [In all, he wrote] On the Art of Prophecy; On Sacrifices (one book); On the Tetrapolis;[7] Foundation of Salamis; Attic Inscriptions; On the Festivals at Athens (seventeen books); On those who have been Archons[8] at Athens from Sokratides as far as Apollodoros;[9] Olympiads (in two books);[10] Atthis in Reply to Demon; Summary of the same Atthis; Summary of the Activity of Dionysios on Sacred Matters;[11] On Sophokles' Stories (five books); On Euripides; On Alkman;[12] On The Mysteries at Athens; Collection of Heroines or Pythagorean Women; Delian Matters (two books); On Discoveries; On Purifications; On Contracts. Suda, s.v. Philochoros (phi,441).

Translation: Graham Shipley (Suda Online: <http://www.stoa.org/sol/>)

Like Androtion, Philochoros in his *Atthis* concentrated mainly on the recent past and particularly the events of his lifetime. Of the 17 books of his *Atthis*, 11 appear to have covered the years 320-260 BCE. For the account of the fourth century, Philochoros used Androtion. Philochoros was extensively cited by later authors and his influence was wide-ranging in Hellenistic historiography, particularly the local history.

Local chronicles, like the *Atthides*, were to an extent the reply to more conventional historiography that centred on major conflicts. The surge of the genre in the fourth century could have been a reaction to the resurgence of panhellenism and its literary expression in general histories of the Greek world, the various *Hellenika* or *Hellenika*-type histories, such as those by Xenophon, Ephoros and Timaios.

The Greek world was a world of a myriad fragments (even after the Macedonian conquest), all with their own histories, traditions and myths. In the general histories, as well as the histories based on major conflicts, most of the poleis are barely mentioned and even the greater ones appear only when they are involved in interpolis politics. With the exception of Hellanikos, a non-Athenian and an author with a vested interest in local histories, the *Atthidographers* belong to the period of Athens' decline. As Athenian involvement in interpolis politics became obscured initially by Sparta and Thebes and later by Macedon and the Diadochoi, Athenian history became less prominent in the general histories of the period.

The existence as well as the non-survival of the local chronicles, Athenian or otherwise, is instructive of the view of the Greeks, particularly of the classical period, of their world. As modern scholars lament the lack of knowledge for the Greek world outside Athens, and to an extent Sparta, so did Greek authors seek to redress the imbalance created by conventional historiography toward the most important poleis and the greater kingdoms surrounding the Greek world.

Suggested Reading:

1. Harding, P. *Story of Athens: The Fragments of the Local Chronicles of Attika* London 2008. [Available from NetLibrary, www.netlibrary.com, via Athens <http://www.athensams.net/myathens/>]

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8. O'Sullivan, Lara 'Philochorus, Pollux and the Nomophulakes of Demetrius of Phalerum' *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 121, (2001), pp. 51-62. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/631827>
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Short Assignment: How much were local histories no more than propaganda leaflets?