Thucydides and Xenophon: Political Historians of Ancient Greece

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1. Thucydides as the Historian of War and Revolution

1.1 Thucydides as a Critical Historian

We now little about Thucydides (also transliterated as Thoukydides) except what we can glean from his own book, The History of the Peloponnesian Wars. He was an Athenian citizen, probably born around the early 450s B.C.E., and was old enough to hold the position of strategos (a general, one of the elected positions in the Athenian democracy) in 424 B.C.E. (Kurke 2001, p128). He was quite young during the earlier events he describes, and therefore had to rely on interviewing others for large sections of his account, but was of manhood age when the war proper began (Thucydides V.26; Finley 1986, p10). It is possible to infer something of Thucydides background and connections:

One important bit of information is that his father's name is Oloros; this is a very unusual name, which we know belonged to a late sixth-century Thracian king who gave his daughter in marriage to Miltiades, son of Kimon (who would later be the Athenian commander at the Battle of Marathon). This name strongly suggests that the historian himself was a member of the family of Miltiades and Kimon, one of the wealthiest and most prestigious families in Athens. Thoukydides' wealth and noble birth, as well as his Thracian connections, tend to be confirmed by what he tells us himself: he was elected Commander (strategos) in 424/3 (a position that still almost invariably went to prominent aristocrats at this time), and he was in 424 'in possession of the working of the goldmines on the Thracian mainland' opposite the island of Thasos (which implies the acquisition of prodigious wealth from slave-worked mines; Thoukydides, 4, 105. 1). Probably because of this Thracian connections, Thoukydides was dispatched as leader of a campaign force to this area, charged with preventing the defection of Athenian allied cities to the Spartan commander Brasidas. Thoukydides (possibly on his first mission as Commander) miscalculated and arrived just hours too late to prevent the defection of the strategically important city of Amphipolis to Brasidas (Thoukydides, 4. 104-106). Rather than face the wrath of the Athenian people for his crucial military failure, Thoukydides chose voluntary exile for the next twenty years (as he tells us himself, 5. 26. 5). (Kurke 2001, pp127-128).

It is also likely that Thucydides had not quite finished revising the account before he died; the last book of The Peloponnesian War has some differing features, e.g. a lack of speeches, the look of a collection of notes, and it breaks off suddenly in 411 B.C.E., some years before the ending of the war itself in 404. The structure of the work, however, suggests that he certainly lived past 404 and he may have died in the early 390s (Kurke 2001, p128). As we shall see, the theme was to be taken up by a later historian following in Thucydides' footsteps; Xenophon.

Herodotus as one of the first writers to create a major systematic history and we can therefore ask to
what extent his work influenced Thucydides. Thucydides certainly knew of Herodotus' work, but does not seem to have been totally impressed. He corrects a couple of details in some areas of Herodotus' work, and there seem to be a couple of other implicit criticisms as well (e.g. I.20 correcting Herodotus, that kings have 1 and not 2 votes in the *gerousia* of Sparta). Certain aspects of the earlier historian's craft do seem to have been followed by Thucydides. First, like Herodotus, he is very careful to try to get eye-witness reports, and likewise, to make a careful comparison of differing accounts:

> And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover; different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for the one side or the other or else from imperfect memories. (Thucydides I.22, trans. R.Warner)

Thucydides states that due to lack of proper evidence it may be impossible to get a 'really precise knowledge of the distant past or even of the history preceding our own' (I.1). Here, he seems more critical than Herodotus in his use of myth and legend. Furthermore, Thucydides is trying to correct the habits of most men, who accept hearsay or current belief without real evidence or critical thought (I.20). It has been suggested that in his study of social symptoms, his diagnosis of problems, and his prognosis of outcomes he may have been influenced by the new body of medical thought that was developing the Greek world in this period (see Kurke 2001, p129).

Another key difference with Herodotus emerges where Thucydides says:

> And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because of the absence in it of any romantic element (*to mythodes*). It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to clearly understand the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the needs of an immediate public, but was done to last forever. (I.2)

There are several fascinating claims in this brief assertion. Thucydides is clearly separating his account from that of myth and poetry. Here, he is distancing himself from both Homer and Herodotus. As noted by M.I. Finley, his standard of accuracy was very high for the late fifth century B.C. (Finley 1986, p18). Thucydides is also willing to be critical of the interpretation of oracles, claiming that people will try read the events that have occurred into a favourable or preferred interpretation of the message (II.54). Thucydides is also quite inventive in trying to create a system of dating by the year and season after the beginning of the war - in this way he avoids the complexity of the numerous local dating systems based on different office holders in different cities (Finley 1986, p22).

Furthermore, Thucydides is claiming that his work provides a practical understanding - the reader will understand the origins of a major war, have a clearer view of the present, and be more equipped to understand similar events if they occur in the future. Thucydides argues that such events will occur again because of a shared human nature which will recreate the conditions for such conflict. Here we can see that Thucydides is not a historian in merely the scholarly sense; he has a political and moral interest in analyzing past and the impact for possible future events. This aspect of Thucydides has not pleased everyone: F.M. Cornford (quite inaccurately) has regarded him as a pseudo-dramatist, while Cochrane has thought of him as a pseudo-social scientist (in Farrar 1988,
However, the task which Thucydides set himself was much more complex than the mere chronicling of events: he searched for both motivations and explanations.

One of the central tasks Thucydides sets himself is to understand historical causation. How had the war begun? What were the real causes? Thucydides is able to distinguish between underlying and immediate causes. Thus the war as a whole was due to the fear felt by the Spartans (and their allies, especially Corinth) of growing Athenian power (I.23), while he nonetheless goes on to give a detailed event of the specific events leading up to hostilities in 431 B.C., which included the Corcyran affair which can be viewed as an immediate cause but involving complex issues of trust, reciprocity and the dangers of alliance systems (see Crane 1998).

1.B Speeches, Argument and Rhetoric

One area where Thucydides is not accurate in our modern sense is his reporting of major speeches. He does report his main speeches in direct discourse, as though they were really being said. However, they are usually very much abbreviated from what we would expect of the original, and, are usually written in the language and style of Thucydides himself (Finley 1986, p25). Likewise, speeches are often presented as antithetical pairs with opposing speakers presenting opposite arguments, and here Thucydides was probably influenced by the formal features of the Sophistic movement which shaped the teaching of oratory and argumentation (Kurke 2001, p130) in classical Athens.

Speech, discussion and debate were very much part of the ancient Greek way of life generally, and even more so in a democratic society in which discussion before the assembly and debates before the law courts were a central part of political practice and the manipulation of power. This became both a professional activity and a social necessity for many the fourth century Athenians, whether as politicians, generals or teachers of oratory. Thucydides himself states that he was unable to remember exactly what was said in the speeches he himself heard, but then goes on to add '... so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words used, to make the speakers say what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation.' (I.22)

In other words, Thucydides gives his speeches the good arguments and good form he thinks they should have had, even if he cannot remember them exactly. Here we can see that Thucydides' aim is more than didactic - in the speeches he opposes fundamental viewpoints and concepts. Here is using some of the methods borrowed from rhetoric, but it seems he also allows some of his own fundamental viewpoints and arguments to emerge as well. Likewise, the speeches add a more dramatic and engaging aspect to his work, which is otherwise highly focused and compressed.

1.C Thucydides and the Political Lessons of History

As stated above, Thucydides had a largely political motive for writing his history. This dimension has been clearly described by M.I. Finley: -

Politics, like philosophy, was a Greek 'invention'. Never before, at least in the west, had there been a society in which ordinary men, lacking either inherited authority or divine sanction, openly debated and decided on such vital matters as war and peace, public finance, or crime and punishment. Political activity had become accepted not only as a legitimate activity but even as the highest form of social activity. And the defeat of the great Persian Empire proved that this new way of running society was effective and valuable. That it was a new way was recognized; so was the fact that even now there among the Greeks powerful opponents to the city-state system, whereby free men organized their life under the rule of law. An inquiry into the past (as distinct from a mere re-telling of
the accepted tales) was thus stimulated, as a complement to the inquiries into ethics and philosophy. (Finley 1986, p14)

Stasis (internal civil conflict and revolution) and its disastrous effects for the security of cities when under external threats, was one of the main themes of his work (see Edmunds 1975; Lintott 1982). However, stasis not only lead to defeat and a loss of power for the state. It also corrupted the morality, politics and very speech of citizens living under such conditions: -

To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides mean that one was totally unfitted for action. (Thucydides III.82)

Stasis, however, was partly built into the system of Athens' naval empire. As states attempted to leave the Delian League, Athens used her stronger force to keep them within the tribute paying system, e.g. in the cases of Naxos, Samos, and Miletos. As this tension increased, Athens began to court allies among the population of these cities (Farrar 1988, p149), supporting democratic factions (verses the oligarchies often supported by Sparta). Athens could always threaten to militarily impose a democracy in order to secure more support for its own policies. This resulted, ironically, in more tension within these states, as the threat of revolution was never far away. Stasis, or at least the threat of it, became another tool for the policy of 'divide and rule'.

Thucydides argued that man's ability to judge is eroded during times of warfare and stress. In peace and prosperity this ability to judge is at its best, but under conditions of war or necessity, passion (orge), fear and anger increase to the point where they interfere with sound decision making (III.82). In such a situation there is a tip from the rational towards the irrational (Farrar 1988, p156), and it is exactly the irrational which skilled demagogues such as Cleon could easily manipulate. The rather erratic decisions which the demos made during the Peloponnesian war, such as sending a huge expedition to invade Sicily (415-413 B.C.), were some of the main reasons why they lost the conflict with Sparta (see Thucydides I.144).

Thus Thucydides revealed how the democratic system can collapse from a system of participation to one serving fragmented interest groups. In the words of Cynthia Farrar; -

Under the pressure of war and <political> polarization, with no powerful gnome <reasoned judgement> to unify it, Athenian politics turned into a fragmented, self-interested game. The change is portrayed by Thucydides as a shift from policy-making to politics. (Farrar 1988, p168, brackets added)

Another central theme of Thucydides' is the notion that excessive power corrupts (Finley 1986, p31). The narrative Thucydides constructs around the decline of the Delian League into the Athenian Empire shows how democratic Athens was corrupted by wealth and power. In this the gullibility of the demos, especially when led by demagogues such as Cleon rather than wiser men such as Pericles, was lead to the destruction of the radical democracy at Athens. Democracy as a system, however, was extremely viable within Athenian society, and a more moderate and stable democracy re-emerged within a few years after the defeat of Athens by Sparta (roughly from 390 B.C. onwards). It would last down to the period of the domination of Greek affairs by Macedon (after 338 B.C.).

Some historians, however, feel that it is not the place of the historian to provide a value judgement,
nor to write history for moral or political aims. (e.g. Fergus Miller's views in *The Emperor in the Roman World*). In such a view, the historian's sole aim is to discover and record the truth, without bias or political intent. However, even 'facts' are complex constructs and all writers are shaped by their assumptions and social conditioning. Thucydides has survived because he does much more than simply record events. In the words of M.I. Finley:

> Thucydides was right in his feeling that the mere piling up of details, no matter how carefully chosen and described, would eventually lose its interest. The combination he discovered survives because it is universal and particular at the same time, and because it is in the last analysis a moralist's work. (1986, p32)

We should not confuse this kind or morality with narrow modern interpretations of ethics. For Thucydides and his contemporaries, history was a way of reflecting values and aims within a society (Farrar 1988, p126), and a serious discussion of the means that should be legitimately and effectively employed in the pursuit of such goals. In Athens of the late 5th century there had been a compound failure in the choice of inappropriate goals. Once the pursuit of excessive power and hegemony of the Greek world became established in the awareness of the *demos*, then only inappropriate means could be found to achieve such ambitions. The procedure whereby the allies of the Delian League became subjects of the Athenian Empire, through the use of force and oppression, was a necessary means if Athens wished to defeat Sparta. Such means failed, based in part on the failure to follow appropriate political and social goals for democratic Athens, that is, its choice of an oppressive empire as a means to power. Thus, while giving political and military details, Thucydides also provides vivid and sometimes horrific accounts that emotionally engage the reader - even when he does not provide an authorial comment or conclusion (Kurke 2001, p132) the logical and moral implications could easily be drawn by the reader.

Cynthia Farrar argues that Thucydides' work has remained a gift for all time "... not because history can be expected to repeat itself but because, presented in a certain way, history prompts identification and participation, and extends and sharpens the reader's ability to assess experience." (Farrar 1988, p131). As noted by Leslie Kurke:

> As such, he is the inventor of political history narrowly construed, a form which seems quite 'natural' to us, but which was at the time (especially in the wake of Herodotos) hardly a self-evident choice. (Kurke 2001, p131)

It is thus more than a main source for ancient Greece history. It is a founding text for historical method and political analysis.

### 2. The Effects of the Peloponnesian War

Thucydides did not finish his history of the war, but the linkage between the writing of Thucydides and Xenophon can be found in the effects of the Peloponnesian war, which shaped the ancient Greek world within a new historical perspective. The Greek city-states were engaged in a massive effort of the Peloponnesian during the period 431-404 B.C.E., verging on a comprehensive and intensive pattern of conflict which engaged much of their known world from Sicily to Asian Minor. This war was fought between Sparta and her allies in the Lacedaemonian League and Athens and her allies in the Delian League, regarded by 431 B.C.E. as the Athenian Empire, but had secondary impacts on Sicily, Egypt, and Persia. Athens was defeated, in the end, by a combination of unwise policies, such as the attempted invasion of Sicily (thereby forcing her into a disastrous conflict with
the powerful city of Syracuse), and the ability of Sparta and her allies to build up sufficient naval forces to eventually blockade Athen's harbours, in combination with a virtual blockade of the countryside through the building of a permanent fort of inside Attica.

The treaty terms for the surrender of Athens seemed relatively mild - the surrender of most of her fleet, destruction of parts of her 'long walls', and the acceptance that Athenian foreign policy would now be dictated by Sparta, though Corinth had argued for the destruction of Athens. Sparta may have wanted to keep a weak Athens under her control as a future balance against the power of cities such as Thebes. The reality was a little harsher than the basic terms indicated. When the Spartan naval commander Lysander took control of Athens he appointed a Commission of Thirty, theoretically to draw up an 'ancestral constitution' of Athens by which the city should be ruled. In reality, this Thirty, including oligarchic leaders such as Theramenes, Critias, Aristoteles and Charikles (Lintott 1982, p161), ruled the city dictatorially with Spartan and their own narrow interests in mind. This was part of a general policy of Sparta to set up oligarchies in the defeated cities. They regarded this form of constitution as more stable, and as more friendly to themselves.

This policy, however, soon backfired. The Thirty became engaged in securing their own security and wealth to the point where they undermined their own ability to rule. They had sent to Sparta for the support of a military garrison, led by the harmost (Spartan military governor) Callibios. With this support they began a reign of terror against their Athenian enemies (Lintott 1982, p162). The actions of the Thirty then became ever harsher, with up to a thousand people executed (Kelly 1974, p147). The Thirty drove many members of the democratic faction out of Athens and Piraeus, which they wished to hold a navally strategic site. Fugitives fled to Megara and Thebes, trying to gain support there against the Thirty. This later city harboured Thrasboulos, who returned across the border with 70 determined men and occupied Phyle, setting up an active resistance to the Thirty. Eventually this group was augmented by a large group of Athenian moderates and was able to defeat the Spartan garrison and the oligarchs, with the Thirty soon deposed from rule.

It was due to association with oligarchic leaders such as these, especially Critias and Alcibiades, that Socrates came to be charged with 'perverting the youth' - i.e. promoting ideas against the democracy (see some of the debates in Plato's Apology and Crito, and Xenophon's Conversations of Socrates). Charmides son of Glauccon, Plato's uncle, had also supported the Thirty. Yet we know that Socrates had refused to help the Thirty in the arrest of Leon, a refusal fraught with personal danger. The charges were made as part of a series of political trials by the restored democracy, e.g. designed to weaken the elite oligarchic group whose power had grown too great in Athens (Lintott 1982, pp168-173). The trials were also a statement of the dignity and power the demos against the pride and hubris (pride) of the oligarchs and their ideas.

King Pausanias of Sparta then led an expedition into Attica, but after some skirmishing accepted a peace treaty with the democrats. One interesting aspect of this counter-revolution is that many non-citizen metics (artisans, workers and traders) had joined in, as well as many of humble status and some slaves. These had been promised some political rights but these were not confirmed until two years later, being given either citizenship or isoteleia, that is the same public duties and rights as other citizens (Lintott 1982, p167; Balogh 1972, p48). It is hard to know what this really meant: it may have focused on the right to bear arms in the army and act as rowers in the fleet, both of which would have secured them some income and also the ability to assert their rights within the state.

The Thirty, as an interlude, shows the failure of Spartan policy in regard to post-war treatment of previous enemies - garrisons and harmosts were not an effective security measure in the long run.
Furthermore, neither Corinth or Thebes, former allies, had consistently helped the Spartans, whose power they now wished to limit. The Peloponnesian War had engaged most of the Greek cities in prolonged naval and land wars which had damaged agriculture, impoverished the cities, and killed many of their citizens. The exact level of this destruction is a complex problem which is still under debate (see Strauss 1986), but on modern parallels any major war of this sort would take at least two generations for recovery.

In Athens between 404 and 386 B.C. there seems to have been an overall decline in wealth, and some increased social tension between the rich and poorer sections of the social spectrum (Strauss 1986, p403). Most importantly, Athens could no longer rely on a major injection of funds from her naval empire. Even the short lived Second Confederacy which she built up could not return the city to its previous level of prosperity, and in a renewed conflict with Sparta over Corcyra in the fourth century neither side could really afford the costs of equipping the required fleets. Athens could no longer afford such a large-scale effort, though we must remember that the Assembly now thought funding for the poor more important than keeping the war chest supplied. The need for internal security, to reduce the possibilities of revolution or class conflict, had superseded her ability to project power internationally. She also had severe manpower shortages, but found large mercenary armies too expensive to maintain.

On the other hand, the long term effects of the Peloponnesian War must not be over-emphasized; the polis remained an important political entity that had learned some lessons and Athens remained an important city. Athens continued to try and limit the power of both Sparta and Thebes as hegemons during the 4th century. The ephebate for the training of young citizen soldiers probably continued to operate down into the second half of the fourth century (as noted in a fourth century stele from Acharnai, see also Pollux, Onomastikon, 8.105-6, Stobaeus, Florilegium, 43.48, translated in Harding 1985, pp133-135). After a partial purge with the fall of the Thirty, Athenian democracy seemed to chart a more moderate path, and the city remained a brilliant centre of culture, philosophy and the arts, if no longer having the wealth of the late fifth century. As such, Athens would be courted by Macedonian and later on Roman interests, though not strong enough to single-handedly turn the tide against the rising power Thebes or Macedonia.

Sparta, too, had paid a high cost in the war. Losses of Spartiates (full-ranking citizen soldiers) had greatly weakened her military strength, and she was unable to maintain as tight a control over her Peloponnesian allies as before (see Powell 1988). Likewise, her defeat by Thebes in 371 B.C.E. at the Battle of Leuctra ended her hegemony over Greek affairs, and was due both to her own diminished strength as well as new military tactics employed against her (see Everson 2004, p174). Although her own later social 'revolutions' were probably based on resource-inequalities which were perhaps already underway by the late fifth century, it seems likely that the continued strain on her military resources also helped exacerbate these problems.

Sparta, came to rely on Persian gold (in turn ceding Persian influence in Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean), and later was willing to be the caretaker of 'General Peaces' declared and enforced by the Persian King, e.g. in 387 B.C.E. (see Lewis 1977). Neither policy made them popular with the rest of the Greeks, and destroyed the claim made towards the end of the Peloponnesian War that the Spartans were the liberators of Hellas (the Athenian orator Isocrates, for example, strongly criticized them on these points). Partly for these reasons, though the states of the defunct Delian League had for a time became their allies, Sparta was unable to maintain a beneficial leadership of Greek affairs in the fourth century. In other words, the only hegemon of the Greek fifth century lost the chance they had to resettle Greek affairs and lay the basis for genuine unity or a true peace.
3. Xenophon and His Times

As noted above, Thucydides was still writing the account of the affairs of the year 411 B.C. when his book broke off, presumably due to the death of the author. A young Athenian aristocrat chose to take up Thucydides' unfinished task of writing about Greek affairs from 411 B.C., especially in his *Hellenica*. Xenophon, the son of Gryllus, was born around 430, died circa 350 B.C. or slightly later. He did not approve of the democracy which had both lost the war, and had allowed one of his teachers to be condemned in court: the philosopher Socrates. It is apparent from the 'Socratic Dialogues' which Xenophon wrote that he was generally acquainted with Socrates and the circle of young men which had gathered around him (see *Memoirs of Socrates* I.1; *The Dinner-Party* I.1), though Xenophon's accounts are apparently far less penetrating than the early dialogues of Plato (see *The Apology; Crito, Phaedo*). But Xenophon was not just a theorist: he owned and ran a country estate, and was a soldier of some note. He joined a mercenary group hired by the Persian pretender to the royal Persian throne, the prince Cyrus, and engaged in the 'long march' (401 B.C.E.) that would traverse much of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, marching at first from Sardis to Babylon (Kurke 2001, p136). Xenophon became a captain for a time and then virtual commander of these 10,000 mercenaries who then had to march back (after the defeat of Kyrus) through hostile territory from Mesopotamia, a major feat recorded in the most famous of his writings, the *Anabasis*.

Xenophon had a strong sympathy for the mixed constitution of Sparta, and for the rather harsh and virtuous character of the Spartan soldier. He also joined a Spartan force in 395 B.C.E. that sought to free the Greek cities in Asian Minor from Persian control, and the Spartans later awarded him a country estate near Olympia (Kurke 2001, p136). These facts would result in the Athenians passing a decree of exile upon him after 371 B.C.E., though this was later reversed and Xenophon may have returned to Athens after 367 B.C.E. (Usher 1970, p83-4).

Xenophon also wrote books on cavalry strategy, the care of horses, a short dialogue on tyranny (*Hieroi*), a biography of the Persian prince, Cyrus (the *Cyropaedia*, a rather romantic work with a 'didactic purpose', see Usher 1970, p84), a study of the Spartan king Agesilaus and a treatise on the proper management of estates, which records some ancient views on 'economics', as well as a defence of Socrates (the *Apology*) a Socratic Dialogue (the *Symposium*), and recollections of Socrates entitled the *Memorabilia* (Kurke 2001, p137). Indeed, one of his main interests was in strong characters who were able to lead men, and this explanation of historical events through a rather biographical approach is one of the main features of his writings (Usher 1970, pp87-88). There are, for example, rather extended portraits of Alcibiades and Jason of Pherae in his historical narrative the *Hellenica*. It is possible that this Jason of Pherae represents a model for, or a hidden portrait of, Philip II of Macedon (Usher 1970, p95).

Xenophon also seems to have been a rather conservative and pious man. Xenophon gave strong credence to the value of cult practices and the use of oracles. In his account of 'The March of Ten Thousand' (the *Anabasis*), in which Xenophon played a prominent personal role, we often hear of him making sacrifices before military operations to read the future in the entrails of victims (Anderson 1974, p34; *Anabasis* VI.4), and reports a scene which favours the credibility of a seer, Euclides of Phlius (Anderson 1974, p35; *Anabasis* VII.8). He used part of the wealth accrued from his adventures to found an Artemis sanctuary at Skillous, near Olympia, and dedicated a tithe of agricultural produce as a first fruit offering there (Burkert 1985, p67; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, V.3). He has been generally typified as a conservative in both religion and politics (Anderson 1974, p40-45).
We can see these religious and moral views clearly where he speaks of the Spartan campaign in Asia Minor led by King Agesilaus, who ordered games to be held for the army before the city of Ephesus:

> And here was another sight to warm the heart - the soldiers, with Agesilaus at the head of them, coming back from the gymnasia with garlands and dedicating them to Artemis. For where you find men honouring the gods, disciplining themselves for war and practicing obedience, you may be sure that there everything will be full of good hope." (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, III.4)

Xenophon's *Hellenica* (sometimes called 'The Story of My Times' but more accurately 'Greek Affairs') takes off exactly where Thucydides breaks off. Xenophon covers the period through to the end of the Peloponnesian War, and subsequent events down to in 362 B.C.E. Xenophon obviously tries to emulate Thucydides' methods; his scrupulous attention to detail, his precise account of political and military affairs, and his attempt to explain the reasons for Athens' loss of the war. Yet Xenophon remains a lesser writer. He lacks the same level of judgement as to what really is important, and his account has rather the approach of a continuous narrative seen from the point of view of various characters. This simple reporting of events means that there is often a lack of deep analysis of political issues. Furthermore, he tends to admit reporting events which are notable in themselves, either reflecting on the moral nature or the achievements of cities and individuals, e.g. the last words of Theramenes when he is executed by Critias, one of The Thirty in Athens (Usher 1970, p86, p91, pp96-7). Here he has broadening his account from Thucydidean criteria towards one which allows the interesting or moral to be included in its own right.

Xenophon also has a different use of language and expression; he is straightforward and direct, avoiding the complex expressive structures used by Thucydides (Usher 1970, p85). Allusions to Homer, Hesiod and Pindar exist in his writing, merely indicating that he was a well-read man of his times (Usher 1970, p69). A more significant influence may have been the sophist Prodicus of Cеos, whose lectures Xenophon attended (Usher 1970, p69). If so, Xenophon may have had a rather more pragmatic view of affairs than the rather sophisticated political viewpoint of Thucydides. Likewise, Xenophon's use of speeches is simpler and more direct; although he shows a working knowledge of oratory the speeches are used in a more functional and immediate way to propel action forward and to give insight into character (Usher, 1970, p70).

His inferiority to Thucydides, however, does not mean that Xenophon isn't a historian following in the line of research developed by Herodotus and Thucydides - criticisms made of Xenophon by writers such as Finley (1986, p30) are much too harsh. Without Xenophon's account, use would only have a vague idea of Greek affairs in the early fourth century. Xenophon's *Anabasis*, (sometimes also called 'The Persian Expedition'), which described the adventures of the Greek mercenary army in the Persia Empire, is a much better account than the *Hellenica* and demonstrates a stronger historical narrative. It pointed out the potential weakness of the Persian Empire to leaders such as Alexander the Great, and would influence later historians such as Arrian (see Stadter 1967).

It is true, however, that later historiography veered towards the writing of universal history embracing the known world, but in approaching such grand topics is not always as accurate or controlled as Thucydides, nor provides as continuous a narrative as provided by Xenophon. Later classical literary critics, such as Dionysus of Halicarnassus, however, criticized Thucydides for the very paucity and ignobility of his subject (in Finley 1986, p30). History, they thought, should be chained to an ideology of what should be the case, to morality and dramatic rhetoric, not to the truth of what had happened historically and politically. Thucydides remains an ancient model of the critical political and military historian, sometimes viewed an early political realist demonstrating
the reality of power within alliance systems.

Thucydides' and Xenophon's accounts are rather pessimistic - Greece had been embroiled in a devastating competition for hegemony for roughly 100 years (see Pouncey 1980). This disaster was based on the energy released by the growth of Greek power in their temporary defeat of Persia, and by the internal dynamics of various city-state systems reaching fruition. This \textit{dunamis}, this enormous energy which these Greek states did have, was also tied to the ideals of an absolute freedom and independence, and worse still, to the idea of the \textit{agon}, the contest, the desire to be the best, and to demonstrate this pre-eminence through action. If Thucydides implies that the war was inevitable, then it is due as much to the character of those involved, as to the chain of specific events which led to the conflict. De Romilly is correct to suggest that this is also the failure of the city-state polity, as conceived in the fifth century, and rests also on a failure to look beyond the confines of the polis for real solutions (1988, p357). Thucydides, through the voice of Pericles, one of the greatest leaders of Athens, argues that since the fate of the individual citizen rises and falls collectively with the prosperity of his polis, all men should defend their city-states (II.60). Since such views seem to have been widely held, such Leagues and alliances as had existed were based purely on the self-interest of the city-states involved, and were only strong while the interests of these city-states coincided. Pan-Hellenic values were not sufficient to provide an enduring unity of interests which would outweigh the perceived benefits of conflict. The fourth century would provide more opportunities to form and promote territorial political organizations beyond the confines of the polis, though none of them would be entirely successful.

4. Fourth Century Legacies

4.A Temporary Rebirth of Athenian Power

We can see these changing historical conditions by briefly looking at some of the trends of the fourth century, showing how Xenophon's world was really quite different from that of Thucydides. Athens was able to rebuild some of its power, especially from the 380's onwards. First, however, it needed to stabilize the state and reduce the likelihood of \textit{stasis}. After the political trials of the 390's and a cautious foreign policy during the decade, this seems to have been done by realizing that the interests of the both the elite and the demos needed to be catered for if Athens was to survive. From this time a new oath was taken by the 6,000 jurors, empaneled every year and then selected by lot. This oath included a clause against tyranny, oligarchy and anti-democratic actions, but was followed up 'by one abjuring obedience to any proposal for the abolition of debt or the redistribution of land.' (Lintott 1982, p178)

Athens, moreover, soon began to assert her independence from Sparta: she supported the Corinthian alliance against Sparta in 395-4 B.C.E.. Likewise, she began rebuilding her fleet and her walls. During this period democracy was re-introduced at Byzantium in the Hellespont and Athens once again had an ally who could help control the grain route to the Black Sea (a long standing aspect of Athenian policy). Although this emphasis on imported grain should not be over-emphasized, Athens still needed to import up to half its grain supplies during the 4th century B.C. (Garnsey 1985, p74).

This rise of Athenian strength culminated in 377 B.C. with a second Athenian Confederacy, this time with a more moderate constitution and policies (autonomy was guarantied in the new Confederacy). It also included the idea that no \textit{cleruchies} (small colonies of Athenian settlers)
would be set up, nor would Athenians buy land in the lands of their allies. The Second Athenian Confederacy seems to have worked quite well for some years. However, through 357-355 B.C.E. the defection of leading states, e.g. Chios, Cos, Rhodes, Byzantium, Mytilene and Corcyra, led to a war to try and bring them back under control (Lintott, p224, p235). Many of these states managed to gain their independence, which was reluctantly recognized by Athens. This so-called 'Social War' led to the end of Athenian prestige, and helped open the way for a growing Macedonian strength in the north Aegean.

4.B Peaces & Confederacies: Experiments in Beyond-the-Polis

The General Peaces imposed during the fourth century might have been an interesting attempt to reduce inter-state conflict, and could have promoted pan-Hellenic prosperity, if they weren't so obviously the domination of affairs by Sparta arms with Persian funding and naval resources. The aim was to prevent new associations and Leagues, e.g. those of Thebes and Athens, or the rebirth of organizations such as the Ionian league, from interfering with the status quo. The state of affairs certainly benefited both Sparta, whose resources could defeat individual cities but not major opposing Leagues, and Persia, who regained strong influence in Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean.

The most important of these 'peaces' will give you some idea of how mainland Greece had become too weak to avoid Persian interference. The so-called Peace of Antalcidas (named after the Spartan officer who helped negotiate it in 387/6 B.C.E.), included the following clauses: -

King Artaxerxes considers it right that the cities in Asia should be his, and of the islands Clazomenae and Cyprus, but the other Greek cities both small and large he allows to be autonomous, except for Lemnos, Imbros and Skyros. These as of old should belong to the Athenians. Whichever side does not accept this peace, I will make war on them together with those who agree to it, by land and sea, with ships and money." (Xenophon, Hellenica, V.30-31)

It was no surprise then, when both Thebes and Athens tried to overturn such arrangements. This was done through the birth of several Leagues and Confederacies, including the the Boeotian and Arcadian federations.

The Boeotia Federation was a League, largely led by Thebes, that had been one of the main threats to Athens in the late fifth century, and now in the fourth was a threat to the hegemony of Sparta. The cities of Boeotia had a federal constitution in which individual cities had oligarchic councils and also sent members to a representative federal council, based on 11 constituencies, four of them from Thebes. Each constituency provided and funded 60 federal councilors and one general. This League, then, was a representative federation of mild oligarchies (see Lintott 1982, pp227-8, and the Oxyrhynus papyrus called the Hellenica).

The Persian and Spartan Peaces were largely directed against this federation, since autonomy and autarchy for each city-state would enforce the break-up of bodies which impinging on the sovereignty of the individual polis. In 371 B.C.E. Thebes refused to accept another peace arbitrated by Persia unless she could sign for all of Boeotia, thereby breaking the autonomy clause specified in the earlier treaty, and threatening Spartan power. It was this combined Boeotian military power, and her use of cavalry and a specially heavy hoplite phalanx, which eventually broke Spartan power, defeating her at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C.E.. In the next two years Spartan territory was invaded, freeing parts of Messenia, the traditional agricultural base of the Spartans. Megapolis was also established as the capital of the Arcadian League, helping assure its independence.
With some ups and downs, the Boeotia Federation remained intact down till the total destruction of Thebes by Alexander the Great after it had revolted from Macedonian control in 355 B.C.E. Though largely dominated by Theban interests and the leadership of Theban generals such as Epaminondas and Pelopidas (see Plutarch's biographical account Pelopidas), it represented one interim effort to balance city-state interests with the realities of international politics.

The Arcadian League was an interesting institution as it united several small cities in the western Peloponnese into a military force strong enough to resist Spartan control. It included Mantinea, Tegea, and Asea, as well as the new city of Megalopolis. Set up largely by the anti-Spartan democratic factions in Mantinea and Tegea, the League pursued a pro-democratic foreign policy. The poorer citizens of these states served in a federal army, some ten thousand strong. This gave them a means of income, as well as providing a strong defensive force. The impetus of this League began to weaken after disputes with Elis in 365-4 B.C.E., and with debates over the proper funding of the army. Towards the end of the century the League still existed in a greatly weakened form (Lintott 1982, p233). This institution, however, did indicate how relatively weak states could organize themselves into regional bodies capable, for at time at least, of resisting major powers such as Sparta.

Several other federations had temporary success during the period: the Chalcidic League to the north unified cities on the peninsula against threats from the interior, for a time was an ally of Athens (from 375 B.C.E.), but was eventually undermined first by Spartan interference (circa 379 B.C.E.), and then by Macedonian intrigues. Likewise, the Euboean league could not avoid control by either Thebes or Athens. However, they did indicate an effort to move beyond dangerously unstable alliance systems towards a more rule-based system of city-state cooperation that was a partial solution to the problems of the fourth century B.C.E.

5. The Rise of Macedonia and the End of the Autonomous Polis

Thucydides and Xenophon were both historians and citizens of Athens, both were men of actions as well as writers, and both were forced to take on a wide canvass of events to explain the dynamic events of the fifth and fourth centuries. The regions north of Athens and Thebes had been viewed by most Greeks as a wild backwater in Hellenic affairs, with the Macedonians only marginally Greek. This was a misinterpretation of an important area: both strategically and politically. Greek colonies dotted the coast of Thrace, Chalcidice and the Hellespont, and the wealth and trade of these northern regions had always been important to Athens. Likewise, the extended tribal groupings of Macedonia and Thessaly opened themselves to the possibility of territorial kingships which would eventually muster resources beyond those of any single city. The tribes of Thessaly, Thrace and Macedonia generally did not develop in the direction of city-states, and in many cases retained traditional kingships rather than developing new constitutional systems. However, the real power of these regions, if they could be united, had been recognized in the fifth century. Thus in Thucydides we find a detailed account of the potentials of Thracean power (see II.97-99, pp188-90).

Macedonia is a rugged territory to the north of Greece, and the Macedonians were not fully accepted by the Greeks as Hellenes, though Macedonian kings claimed Greek bloodlines relating them to the kings of Argos that would later on allow them to compete in the Olympic games (see further Hammond & Walkbank 1988; Tomlinson 1985). Nonetheless, Macedonians probably spoke a dialect of Greek (Tomlinson 1985, p133), the Macedonians had traditional kinship with the Greeks, and the Macedonian kings encouraged Greek culture at their court and in the cities of
Macedonia. Thus we know that both Euripides (who wrote his play the *Bacchae* there) and Aristotle visited Macedonia, as did Anaximenes of Lampscacus, a teacher and rhetorician. Macedonia was a country often internally divided, as well as engaged in intermittent warfare with their neighbours, including Epirus, the Illyrians, and the Thracians (Tomlinson 1985). The country also had no direct access to suitable coastal ports, being hemmed in on the coast by Greek colonies and by the cities of Chalcidice. During the end of the 5th century this region was under Persian control, but was liberated by 479 B.C.E.

King Archelaus managed to unite Macedonia during the late 5th century, but this unity did not survive his assassination. Nonetheless, a stronger military and economic infrastructure was developed in Macedonia during the 5th century. Likewise, the time that the young prince Philip, later to be Philip II, spent as a hostage at Thebes (during the brief period when the Boeotian League controlled Macedonia) may have allowed him to learn something of the new Theban military tactics (Kelly 1974, p168; Tomlinson 1985, p134), including the use of the heavy phalanx formation (wielding a long spear or *sarissa*) in conjunction with light auxiliary troops and larger cavalry units (see Everson 2004). Soldiers had their equipment issued to them by the state during this period, allowing a sure supply of manpower for this key military formation, and were fined for their loss or replacement (Everson 2004, p177, p190, p193). It was this combination, improved by both Philip II and Alexander the Great which would defeat first the Greek city-states, then conquer the Persian Empire.

It was under Philip II (born circa 382) that Macedonia became a major power intervening in central and southern Greece (see Adams & Borza 1982; Tomlinson 1985). Philip first defeated his troublesome neighbours, the Paeonians and Illyrians, and then set about breaking the Chalcidic league which limited his full access to the sea. He first took Amphipolis and then Pydna, out-maneuvering Athens through diplomatic subterfuge and then sudden speedy action. Next, Philip supported Olynthus against Potidea and captured that city, followed by the seizure of Methone, an Athenian ally, in 353 B.C.E. Philip now had control of the sea, as well as strategic gold and silver mines which allowed him to mint new coinage and fund his military and social programs (see Errington 1990; Cawkwell 1978; Kelly 1974).

These actions revealed the weakness and indecision of Athens: but they had their hands full with the Social War against the allies, and by 353 were in a seriously weakened state. Part of this weakness may have rested upon willingness to pay the cost of maintaining a strong army to mounting a large expedition. Part of this may have been the Theoric Fund, originally set up in 450 B.C. by Pericles to ensure that the poorer citizens could afford the entry fee into the dramatic festivals. However, by this time it seems to have been used as a means of distributing a living allowance to all citizens. All public funds not used for other means were placed in this fund and then redistributed, possibly a necessary alleviation of distress after the Peloponnesian War, though such policies would also have made certain demagogues popular during the period (Kelly 1974, p171).

Local rivalries allowed the Macedonians to be brought in as arbiters of Greek affairs. The sacred oracle centre of Delphi, which was technically in the territory of Phocis, was under the nominal control of the Amphictyonic League, dominated by Thebes in the 350's. Phocis, however, was a potential rival of Theban dominance, and after 356 the Phocians seized Delphi, though they at first did no harm to the sanctuaries or their wealth. However, a Sacred War was declared against Phocis, which responded by the use of the riches of Delphi to hire a mercenary army of some 10,000 troops. The Phocians had some success down to 354 B.C., but this could not be sustained. Philip II's involvement against the Phocian Confederacy was certainly to his political advantage, but it should
also be noted that from 'the outset of his career Philip showed marked respect for the cult of Apollo and especially for his chief sanctuary' at Delphi (Buckler 1989, p5; Cawkwell 1978, pp66-68). Philip II marched south in 353 B.C., and was first defeated by the Phocians, but was victorious in 352 B.C.E.

In 349 Philip sought to destroy the last major independent city of Chalcidice, Olynthus, which had supported the prospect of civil in Macedonia (Tomlinson 1985, p136). Olynthus sought Athenian help, which eventually dispatched a small force but this was 'too little and too late' (Tomlinson 1985, p136). In 348 B.C. Philip stirred up minor revolts in Euboea against Athenian control, then advanced on Olynthus, which he managed to capture and then destroyed. Disturbed by Macedonian power and Philip successes, the Athenians sent a peace embassy to Philip in 346 B.C. It included Demosthenes, the orator who was still critical of Philip, and another orator and politician, Aeschines, who was positively influenced by Philip's skillful diplomacy.

Shortly after Philip traveled south and decisively defeated Phocis, dispersing the city into villages, and taking two votes on the Amphictyonic council. He presided over the Pythian Games, in which Athens and Sparta refused to attend. Philip then demanded that he be accepted as a member of the Amphictyonic Council - in effect, a recognition of Macedonian status as a Greek state (as Hellenes) and the validity of his interests in central Greece. Athens acknowledged him, and around this time the orator Isocrates wrote a kind of 'open letter' to Philip to lead an expedition against Persia, using Pan-Hellenic ideals to attempt to foster peace in mainland Greece (Tomlinson 1985, p137). However, this project would not eventuate until Alexander the Great took up the idea after the death of his father.

From this time the Athenians, goaded in part by the speeches of Demosthenes, were determined enough to rebuff the Macedonian advance. The Athenians resisted Macedonian intervention at Byzantium, in part because this city helped control the important grain imports that ran through the Bosphorus (Tomlinson 1985). Athens at last took Demosthenes' advice and used the Theoric Fund to help mount a major military force.

Philip, however, really needed to establish his dominance in central Greece. Conflict within the Amphictyonic League gave him another opportunity, with Philip being appointed its champion, opposed by Thebes and Athens (Tomlinson 1985, p137). Thebes now held the pass at Thermopylae, but Philip by-passed this position and then threatened Thebes and Athens, who joined in alliance against Philip. Philip, however, still eluded them, campaigning in central and western Greece. Philip once again made unsuccessful overtures for peace. Finally, in 338 Philip met and defeated Athens and its allies at Chaeronea. Prince Alexander commanded crack Macedonian units which managed to defeat the elite Theban forces, the 'Sacred Band' (Tomlinson 1985). With this victory, Philip was now in a position to dictate the terms of the peace to those he had defeated.

Philip broke Theban power by dissolving the Boeotian League, and establishing a pro-Macedonian oligarchy supported by a Macedonian garrison. Athens he treated leniently, but took control of the Chersonesse from them, thereby ensuring control over their main source of imported grain. By 338 Philip had to authority to summon a comprehensive Congress at Corinth. Sparta did not attend, but Philip went ahead and established a Synhedrion of the Peoples of Greece. The terms of this Federation are interesting: it ensured peace among members, left them a high decree of autonomy concerning internal laws, coordinated naval efforts against piracy, it regulated military levies by the Greeks and appointed Philip leader of an expedition against Persia (Tomlinson 1985, p138). It also
ensured, however, that no other Greek leagues or empires could be built up to challenge Macedonian power. However, Philip was never to lead this Macedonian and Greek force into the east. He was assassinated in 336 B.C. and it was left to Alexander the Great to marshal this pan-Hellenic expedition against Persia.

The Greek cities in large measure fell because of their inability to really unite against Macedonia. An early and decisive resistance with the support of cities such as Olynthus, Methone, and Potidea could have limited the Macedonian advance and given Macedonia's defeated northern enemies a willingness to renew hostilities. Likewise, the combined forces of Thebes, Athens and southern Greece might have been enough to stop even the Macedonian army. But only Athens and Thebes deployed major forces, and then rather too late. Macedonia had been allowed to grow too strong. On the other hand, we should not under-estimate the real power of Macedonia, which had been developing a powerful state and military machine for over a hundred years. It was fettered neither by the ideals of democracy, nor the narrow confines of a polis power structure. Its kingship, which was rarely autocratic, was well designed to build a loyal army and administrative group (Errington 1990, p101) that could control a large territorial state and empire.

At this stage the world of Thucydides and Xenophon has begun the transition towards the age of Hellenistic Kingdoms, but neither Greece history nor that of its cities was at an end. Rather, they would form important civic and cultural components of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Their vitality would only be exhausted centuries later. Likewise, Hellenistic writing would turn towards the themes of universal history, biography, individual philosophical salvation, and moral persuasion often aimed at rulers and kings (see Lightfoot 2001). However, the masters of narrative and political history, Xenophon and Thucydides, would not be surpassed until the modern period. Thucydides was praised and studied by David Hume, Emmanuel Kant and Thomas Hobbes (Briggs 1985, p282), and would provide lessons for modern historians and politicians in the 20th century (Briggs 1985; Sheets 1994; Monten 2006; Klarevas 2004, p18).

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