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Abydos and Byzantium: The Sources for Two Episodes in the Ionian War

By H. D. Westlake, Cambridge

The history of the Ionian war from the point in the late summer of 411 where the eighth book of Thucydides breaks off abruptly is derived mainly from the accounts by Xenophon and Diodorus. There has long been widespread agreement that these accounts, which are the only surviving continuous sources for the last six and a half years of the war, belong to separate and independent traditions. The account by Diodorus is undoubtedly based on a more detailed narrative by Ephorus, of which virtually nothing has been preserved¹, and is largely an epitome of it. Since the recovery of some passages from the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* on episodes in the Ionian war², the dependence of Diodorus, indirectly through Ephorus, upon that work has been strikingly confirmed. Consequently his account has been credited with a measure of respectability hitherto never bestowed upon it. His blatant faults, which are as prominent here as elsewhere, including his indulgence in empty rhetoric, are undeniable and tend to cast doubt upon his trustworthiness. There is, however, no longer any validity for assuming, as almost all scholars did a few decades ago, that information given by Diodorus which differed from, or even was additional to, information given by Xenophon deserved scant credence and might justifiably be ignored. Indeed in some recent investigations of episodes in the Ionian war the version of Diodorus, instead of being dismissed as worthless, has been to a large extent preferred to that of Xenophon³. The purpose of this paper, in which the sources for the Athenian victories at Abydos in 411 and Byzantium in 408 will be examined, is to establish not so much that the accounts by Diodorus are more convincing than those by Xenophon but rather that, for the most part, their versions supplement one another; that the ver-

1 It appears that only two fragments, FGrHist 70 F 199 and 200, contain information relating to the Ionian war.

2 V. Bartoletti, *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (Leipzig 1959) for the Florentine papyrus; L. Koenen, *Stud. Pap.* 15 (1976) 69–76, for a more recent discovery.

3 For example, P. Pédech, *Rev. Et. Gr.* 82 (1969) 43–55; A. Andrewes, *Journ. Hell. Stud.* 102 (1982) 15–25 (to whose introductory paragraph on the current evaluation of the sources I am indebted).

sions of each episode differ mainly because they are dependent originally upon different informants, or groups of informants, who, though subject to human fallibility, gave more or less accurate reports of the episode but had observed it from different viewpoints. The treatment of the operations at Abydos and Byzantium by Plutarch in his *Alcibiades* will also be considered: in each of his accounts there appear to be traces of influence by both traditions.

1. *Abydos*⁴

The three extant accounts of this naval battle, which was fought in the autumn of 411, are: Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1, 1, 2–7; Diodorus 13, 45, 1–47, 2; Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 27, 2–6⁵. Large numbers of ships were engaged in the action, and its result exerted a considerable influence upon the course of the war. The Athenians won more decisively than they had at Cynossema a few weeks earlier, and the victory contributed greatly to their recovery from adversity, which they sustained for several years until the effective collaboration between Lysander and Cyrus began to impose an intolerable strain upon their resources.

The account of Xenophon is rather brief. Because he adopts his normal practice of picking out striking features of the episode, the narrative is characteristically graphic, but for the same reason it is somewhat lacking in clarity and coherence. It reflects the viewpoint of the Spartans and must be based largely, if not wholly, upon information from Spartan sources. He is most unlikely to have sought reports from Spartans until after his return from service in Asia in 394, when their memories of events in the Ionian war might have become dim, and he is believed to have written the first two books of the *Hellenica* at a considerably later date⁶.

He begins by describing how Dorieus sailed into the Hellespont from Rhodes with a squadron of fourteen ships at dawn. It was spotted by an Athenian lookout, and twenty Athenian ships were sent to intercept it. Dorieus and his force fled towards the shore and, beaching their ships near Rhoeteum, fought from them and from the land until the Athenians, without accomplishing anything, withdrew to join the rest of their fleet at Madytus. Meanwhile

4 A useful map of the Hellespont, marking all the places mentioned in this paper, is provided in A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K. J. Dover, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 5 (1981) xiv. More detailed maps of the Asiatic shore, including some modern place names, may be found in J. M. Cook, *The Troad* (Oxford 1973) 2, 62 and 361. For the European shore (Thracian Chersonese) see S. Casson, *Macedonia, Thrace and Illyria* (Oxford 1926) 211.

5 S. Accame, *Rend. Classe Sc. mor., stor. e fil. Accad. dei Lincei*, series 6, 14 (1938) 348–354, analyses these accounts and discusses the differences between them. It will be seen that I agree with his conclusion (353) that the version of Xenophon depends on Spartan sources and the version of Diodorus on Athenian sources.

6 H. R. Breitenbach, *RE* 9 A, 2 (1967) 1679–1680, cf. J. K. Anderson, *Xenophon* (London 1974) 72, who is less positive.

Mindarus, who saw the battle while sacrificing at Ilium, hastened down to the sea to bring assistance and after launching his ships sailed downstream to take over those of Dorieus (1, 1, 2–4). The Athenian fleet put out to sea to oppose him, and a battle was fought near Abydos along the shore from dawn to evening with fluctuating fortunes. Alcibiades then appeared with eighteen ships, and the Peloponnesians fled to Abydos, where they were supported with cavalry and infantry under Pharnabazus, who, riding into the sea, fought there himself and encouraged others. The Peloponnesians battled to protect their ships, but the Athenians dragged away thirty of them, though the crews escaped, and, after recovering their own ships lost in earlier engagements, sailed across to Sestos (*ibid.* 5–7).

This version of the battle and its antecedents evokes some disturbing questions. The first of these, to which several scholars have drawn attention, is the following: if Dorieus entered the Hellespont at dawn (2), how can the battle between the two main fleets, which was preceded by a series of activities by both sides, have lasted μέχρι δειλῆς ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ (5)? Some scholars have proposed the deletion of ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ, a desperate and unwarranted remedy⁷. A less drastic suggestion is that the major battle was not fought on the day on which Dorieus entered the Hellespont but on the next and that it continued throughout that day⁸. It is not perhaps incredible that Xenophon may have been sufficiently careless to have failed to detect, or to have failed to inform his readers, that the whole operation was spread over two days. There is, however, a serious objection. It is difficult to believe that the crews of the two main fleets could have endured the physical strain of an action fought throughout the entire length of even a short autumn day in the narrowest and most demanding section of the Hellespont, where the current normally flows at more than two and a half knots and sometimes much faster⁹. A more probable explanation is that Xenophon has misinterpreted a report that fighting between the two sides began at dawn and ended at dusk, which would have been substantially true. Indeed Dorieus and his men can have had little respite throughout the day, but the main engagement probably did not begin until the afternoon.

7 So O. Keller and L. Breitenbach, followed by Accame, *op. cit.* (above n. 5) 349 n. 3.

8 G. E. Underhill, *n. ad loc.*

9 *Black Sea Pilot*¹¹ (Ministry of Defence, 1969) 43–44, gives detailed information about the currents in the straits, including the statement that, when strong winds are blowing from the north or north east, the rate, especially in the narrows, has been known to reach five knots. It was certainly in this narrow section that the battle was fought (see below p. 322). Although conditions must not be assumed to have been precisely the same in antiquity, Polybius (16, 29, 14) declares that it was absolutely impossible for ships to anchor off Abydos except inside the harbour and Strabo (13, 1, 22) that it was necessary to cross the straits obliquely in order to avoid the full force of the current. In the *Iliad* (2, 845; 12, 30) the Hellespont is ἀγάρροος. If, as Diodorus (13, 46, 4) states, a storm occurred during the battle (see below p. 318–319), the additional strain imposed on the oarsmen must have been severe.

In another passage Xenophon may be thought to have misrepresented the situation, but more probably he has not. It is difficult to understand why Mindarus was sacrificing at Ilium, more than 30 km from Abydos, where his fleet was based, at a time when, as he might be expected to have known, the arrival of Dorieus was imminent. It is true that Spartan leaders on active service set much store by divination through sacrifice¹⁰ and that Ilium was an appropriate venue. Mindarus must, however, have been anxiously awaiting the coming of reinforcements to make good his losses at Cynossema (cf. Diod. 13, 45, 1) and have foreseen the desirability of safeguarding their passage up the Hellespont. It is therefore tempting to suspect that in fact his visit to Ilium took place before the arrival of Dorieus and that Xenophon, influenced by his instinct for dramatic effects and possibly misled by his sources, has mistakenly synchronized the two events. There are, however, reasons for believing that on this point Xenophon is correct and that the absence of Mindarus at Ilium should be attributed rather to a remarkable lack of contact between him and Dorieus, which is all the more astonishing in that, when he and his fleet were approaching the Hellespont only a few weeks earlier, he was in effective communication with the Peloponnesian squadron stationed at Abydos¹¹. As will be noted below¹², his fleet did not on this occasion put to sea as promptly as might have been expected to support Dorieus, and its tardiness can easily be accounted for if Mindarus was caught unawares far from his headquarters and had to ride back from Ilium with all possible speed. Dorieus may have completed his voyage from Rhodes more rapidly than had been anticipated: he seems to have been in great haste to join the Peloponnesian fleet at Abydos (cf. Diod., loc. cit.) and may well have thought speed more important than the establishment of communication with Mindarus from a distance. It is noteworthy that, according to Xenophon (2), he chose to sail into the straits at dawn instead of waiting until darkness fell, when he would have stood a better chance of escaping detection.

On other issues the version of Xenophon is open to criticism. Although he states that Mindarus put to sea to take over the squadron of Dorieus (4), he does not make clear when or where its incorporation into the main Peloponnesian fleet, which the Athenians must have wished to prevent, took place. Information on this point would have thrown light on the location of the area where

10 Agesilaus was an inveterate sacrificer (examples are: Xen. *Hell.* 3, 4, 3. 15 and 23; 6, 5, 12. 17 and 18), and he was not exceptional among Spartan leaders in this respect (cf. *ibid.* 3, 1, 17 and 2, 16, Dercylidas; 4, 7, 2. 5 and 7, Agesipolis).

11 Thuc. 8, 102, 2 (whatever the meaning of this obscure passage may be, it shows that some system of signalling was operating efficiently). On the same occasion the Athenians at Sestos learned of their danger through beacons (*ibid.* 1). More than twenty years later Antalcidas, when in command of a fleet at Abydos, was informed through signals from lookouts that an Athenian squadron was entering the Hellespont (Xen. *Hell.* 5, 1, 26–27).

12 See below p. 321.

the opposing fleets were deployed before and during the battle, which Xenophon defines vaguely as being “near Abydos along the shore” (5)¹³. Unfortunately he makes no further mention of Dorieus and his squadron after its encounter with the Athenians at Rhoeteum.

The tactics attributed to the Athenians are not by any means convincing. The twenty ships which engaged the squadron of Dorieus were presumably stationed not far from the mouth of the Hellespont, perhaps at Elaius, where they would be favourably placed to intercept an approaching enemy force¹⁴. The failure of these twenty ships to make much impression on the fourteen ships of Dorieus beached near Rhoeteum is hardly surprising if, as seems probable¹⁵, they were under orders not to press home their attack in the event of determined resistance. Much more surprising are the subsequent actions attributed to the Athenians: that the twenty ships sailed off (ἀπέπλευσαν) to Madytus to join the rest of the fleet (3) and that, apparently only after the arrival of these ships, the entire Athenian force put to sea to oppose Mindarus (5). The Athenians must have had lookouts at suitable points along the European shore, and the generals can hardly have required the twenty ships to toil unnecessarily against the current all the way to Madytus instead of themselves putting out with the main fleet to join this squadron, especially as it might have been intercepted by Peloponnesians from Abydos. If, however, as has been suggested, Xenophon was wholly dependent on Peloponnesian sources, his information on Athenian movements could well have been incomplete or inaccurate¹⁶.

The account by Diodorus (13, 45, 1–47, 2) is more detailed than that of Xenophon. Although a section of it consists of conventionally rhetorical battle narrative, which is valueless and may be thought to weaken confidence in the

13 It will be suggested below (p. 321) that the phrase is misleading.

14 G. Busolt, *Gr. Gesch.* 3, 2 (Gotha 1904) 1522, cf. 722 n. 1, assumes that they were stationed with the rest of the Athenian fleet at Madytus, presumably because, according to Xenophon, the lookout signalled to ‘the generals’ (2). Xenophon, however, adds that they (sc. the generals) put to sea with the twenty ships against Dorieus, which is surely an inaccurate statement, since at least one general must have remained to command the main fleet. It is also questionable whether the twenty ships, if starting from Madytus, could, even with aid of the current, have covered the considerable distance to the neighbourhood of Rhoeteum rapidly enough to have challenged Dorieus there. Xenophon has compressed somewhat confusingly his description of a situation in which there was a series of contacts, doubtless through signals, from the lookout to the generals and from the generals to the twenty ships.

15 See below n. 24.

16 An additional point of less importance is that the vivid picture of Pharnabazus riding into the sea in an attempt to rescue the crews of the Peloponnesian ships (6) is somewhat suspect. Not only is Xenophon partial to such colourful details, but Pharnabazus at his famous meeting with Agesilaus, which Xenophon records and may well have attended, is stated to have referred with some pride to this exploit (*Hell.* 4, 1, 32) and may well have exaggerated his personal contribution. There is, however, no doubt that he and his troops mitigated the severity of the Peloponnesian defeat.

trustworthiness of the rest¹⁷, it is not lacking in coherence. Unlike the version of Xenophon, it reflects the viewpoint of the Athenians rather than that of the Spartans.

Dorieus is stated to have sailed from Rhodes towards the Hellespont in haste to join Mindarus, who was assembling allied ships at Abydos from every possible source. The Athenians at Sestos received an early warning that Dorieus was approaching, and they put out with their entire fleet of seventy-four ships to intercept him. He was caught unawares in mid channel and, alarmed by the size of the enemy fleet, sought refuge at Dardanus, where he took command of the garrison and speedily organized the defence of his ships. The Athenians, after pursuing him vigorously to the shore, were proceeding, thanks to their superiority in numbers, to drag away the enemy ships when Mindarus with eighty-four ships from Abydos arrived at Cape Dardanus¹⁸ in support of Dorieus. A land force under Pharnabazus also joined in the action. In the ensuing battle Mindarus, whose entire fleet now amounted to ninety-seven ships, was on the right wing and the Syracusans on the left, while Thrasybulus commanded the Athenian right and Thrasyllus the left (45, 1–7). There follows the long rhetorical passage mentioned above, in which all the conventional features of a naval battle are trotted out: the enthusiasm of the oarsmen, the skill of the helmsmen and the valour of the marines (45, 8–46, 2). Although nothing in this passage is demonstrably untrue, it may safely be ignored.

After a long struggle in which neither side could win a decisive advantage, Alcibiades appeared unexpectedly and by chance with twenty ships. From a distance the identity of this squadron was not determinable, but when Alcibiades had a purple flag hoisted, it was seen to be a reinforcement for the Athenians, and the Peloponnesians fled in panic. The Athenians at once captured ten ships, but their efforts were hampered by a storm, and when they pursued the enemy to the shore and tried to tow away ships that had escaped thither, the troops of Pharnabazus put up a stout defence. As darkness fell, the Athenians withdrew to Sestos and next morning, after recovering their own damaged ships, set up a second trophy at Cynossema. Mindarus had retired to Abydos early in the night with his depleted fleet (46, 2–47, 1).

This account of the battle, apart from the worthless passage mentioned above and a sprinkling of rhetorical flourishes elsewhere, is commendably coherent and indicates some understanding of naval warfare as conducted towards the end of the 5th century¹⁹. The storm which impeded the pursuing

17 Another blemish is that here, as elsewhere, Diodorus confuses Pharnabazus with Tissaphernes (13, 46, 5–6). Hereafter references to Diodorus are to Book 13.

18 This cape, now named Kepez, is 2 km north of Dardanus according to Cook, *op. cit.* (above n. 4) 57.

19 Polybius (12, 25 f 1, FGrHist 70 T 20), who is not conspicuous for the generosity of his judgements on other historians, credits Ephorus with some aptitude in describing naval

Athenians (46, 4) is possibly suspect and could be an embellishment transferred from other sea battles. On the other hand, since Mindarus was evidently expecting reinforcements other than the squadron of Dorieus (45, 1), the statement that, when the twenty ships under Alcibiades were first sighted, both sides were uncertain whether they were friendly or hostile (46, 3) can hardly be a fabrication introduced for dramatic effect. The geographical information is adequate and consistent, and figures relating to numbers of ships seem to be largely accurate, though it is strange that the total losses on the Peloponnesian side are not stated²⁰.

The account by Plutarch (*Alcib.* 27, 2–6) is confined to the climax of the action, the only stage in which Alcibiades played a part. It does, however, make a contribution to the study of the sources. Whereas most of it seems to have been derived, ultimately at least, from the version of Xenophon, it includes points of detail mentioned by Diodorus but not by Xenophon: that Alcibiades arrived *κατὰ τύχην* (2); that neither side could identify his squadron correctly until he had a flag hoisted²¹; that the Athenians set up a trophy after their victory (6). Plutarch infers from Xenophon that at the end of the battle crews of the damaged Peloponnesian ships swam ashore (5). Since he was certainly capable of combining two sources, he may perhaps have derived most of his material from Xenophon but also have consulted Ephorus²². It is, however, perhaps more likely that he followed a single source, the *Hellenica* of Theopompus, and that Theopompus based his account mainly on that of Xenophon²³ but also used the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*.

It is on the opening phases of the episode that the two traditions represented by the versions of Xenophon and Diodorus appear to disagree most widely. The first clash between the opposing forces occurred according to

battles, and Ephorus seems to have been less addicted to rhetoric than other 4th century historians, see below p. 327 with n. 48. The conventional rhetoric in the narrative of Diodorus on the action near Abydos should not be attributed to Ephorus, as Accame, *op. cit.* (above n. 5) 351–352, maintains, but to Diodorus himself.

20 Busolt, *op. cit.* (above n. 14) 722 n. 1, rejects the version of Diodorus mainly on the ground that the Athenians would not have committed their entire fleet to action against Dorieus, thereby exposing themselves to attack by Mindarus on their left wing and rear. Diodorus does not, however, state that the Athenians used all their seventy-four ships in attempts to drag away those of Dorieus from the shore at Dardanus. In an operation of this kind, though superiority in numbers was patently advantageous, too many ships attacking a much inferior enemy at once would have hampered one another. A considerable proportion of the Athenian fleet doubtless remained at some distance off shore, since intervention by Mindarus from Abydos sooner or later was inevitable.

21 Plutarch differs slightly from Diodorus here in stating that both sides were mistaken, the first reaction of the Peloponnesians being one of confidence and that of the Athenians one of alarm.

22 R. Flacelière in his introduction to the *Alcibiades* (Budé, *Vies* 3, 1964) 113.

23 He was accused by Porphyry (FGrHist 115 F 21) of plagiarism from Xenophon, though the charge could well be a gross exaggeration.

Xenophon when the squadron of Dorieus was challenged by the twenty Athenian ships and sought refuge near Rhoeteum, but according to Diodorus when it was caught unawares by the entire Athenian fleet and sought refuge at Dardanus. The information provided by Xenophon on this opening phase seems thoroughly convincing: its details can hardly have been fabricated by his informants or by himself. This version receives some support from his statement that Mindarus, while at Ilium, saw the development of the situation near Rhoeteum²⁴. Accordingly there might appear to be a strong case for dismissing the version of Diodorus on the beginning of the action as apocryphal. Yet the outright rejection of information preserved by a literary authority merely because it is not easily reconcilable with another version of the same episode is an unsatisfactory resort unless some reason can be suggested, such as demonstrable misunderstanding or prejudice, to explain how the rejected information came to be recorded. In this instance errors could have arisen in the course of transmission²⁵, but an alternative solution may be offered not involving the rejection of the information on the initial phase of the action given by Diodorus, which, as already noted, is largely clear and coherent. The two versions may be reconciled by accepting the reasonable suggestion that Xenophon and Diodorus are not describing the same stage but successive stages in the development of the situation; that the squadron of Dorieus fled to the Asiatic shore not once but twice, first near Rhoeteum and again at Dardanus; that both versions have been subject to a kind of haplography.

The absence of any reference by Diodorus to the encounter between the squadron of Dorieus and the twenty Athenian ships is not at all remarkable. It was brief and inconclusive and could for that reason have seemed unworthy of mention to an Athenian serving with the main fleet or to a historian interested mainly in events producing positive results. The absence of any reference by Xenophon to fighting at Dardanus is perhaps more surprising, if any took place, but, as has already been pointed out above, there is an unfilled gap in his narrative between the withdrawal of the twenty Athenian ships from Rhoeteum and the setting out of the Peloponnesian fleet from Abydos after Mindarus had returned from Ilium. Although the squadron of Dorieus remained intact, his position near Rhoeteum was very vulnerable. He was nearly 30 km from the Peloponnesian base at Abydos; no land forces were apparently near

24 An informant who was with Mindarus at Ilium might well have assumed from his distant view of the coastline that the twenty Athenian ships had been beaten off, whereas they were probably under orders to withdraw if they were not at once successful.

25 Dorieus might have been mistakenly assumed to have sought refuge at Dardanus and not at Rhoeteum because the major battle was known to have taken place in the narrows. Yet, if Dorieus did not reach Dardanus on the day on which he entered the Hellespont, the main fleets would surely have confronted one another off the coast near Rhoeteum at a considerable distance downstream from the narrows. In that case Xenophon could hardly have located the battle "near Abydos" (*Hell.* 1, 1, 5).

enough to help to protect his ships; support from the Peloponnesian fleet, which he doubtless expected, did not materialize, being delayed by the absence of Mindarus, of which he cannot have been aware; the Athenians knew where he was and were almost certainly preparing to renew their attack with a much stronger force. Faced with this perilous situation, he may well have decided to put to sea again while no enemy ships were in sight and try to reach Abydos; if attacked en route by the Athenians, as in fact he was, he might find refuge at Dardanus²⁶, which was roughly equidistant from Rhoeteum and Abydos. There he would have the support of a local garrison and would be in a much better position to establish contact with Mindarus. Although Diodorus is very probably mistaken in assuming that Dorieus was in action for the first time when he encountered the Athenian main fleet and fled to Dardanus (45, 2–3)²⁷, the rest of his narrative on the developments culminating in the major battle is, if interpreted as has been suggested, entirely credible. He is also almost certainly correct in indicating that a considerable time elapsed after Dorieus reached Dardanus, during which he was subjected to Athenian onslaughts, before the Peloponnesian fleet arrived to his assistance. This delay is in accord with the absence of Mindarus from Abydos to which Xenophon refers.

Neither Xenophon nor Diodorus gives precise information on the position of the opposing fleets when the general engagement between them began. The latter provides more indications than the former. Since the total number of ships in action from start to finish amounted to not much less than two hundred, they must have stretched for a substantial distance along the Hellespont. A few weeks earlier at the battle of Cynossema, when the Peloponnesian fleet was slightly smaller²⁸, it had extended, according to Thucydides (8, 104, 2), from Abydos to Dardanus. Modern scholars have chosen to distinguish between these two battles by referring to the second as “the battle of Abydos”, evidently an inference from the statement of Xenophon that it was fought *περὶ Ἄβυδον* (Hell. 1, 1, 5)²⁹. This statement is, however, not only vague but also positively misleading, because it suggests that the fleets were deployed along the coast upstream as well as downstream from Abydos, which is most unlikely. Theopompus apparently used the term ‘the second seabattle near Cynossema’ (FGrHist 115 F 5), and Diodorus states that the Athenians “set up a tro-

26 W. Leaf, *Strabo on the Troad* (Cambridge 1923) 151, describes Dardanus as “the first good landing-place on the Asiatic shore”.

27 His statement that the Athenian fleet was based at Sestos may also have been an error, though some ships may have been there while others were at Madytus (Xen. *Hell.* 1, 1, 3).

28 It numbered eighty-six then but ninety-seven now. Since the Peloponnesians had eighty-four ships on leaving Abydos (Diod. 45, 6) but ninety-seven in the major battle (ibid. 7), the squadron of Dorieus was evidently able to leave its refuge at Dardanus and play a part in the engagement.

29 Plutarch, *Alcib.* 27, 3, uses the same phrase, which certainly originates from Xenophon.

phy near the previous one" (47, 1). Thus the two engagements must have taken place in approximately the same part of the Hellespont, though developments preceding the second, which have already been discussed, suggest that it was fought somewhat further downstream and that the fiercest of the struggle was concentrated in a limited area not far offshore between the cape and the city of Dardanus³⁰.

On the course of the major conflict between the opposing fleets the versions of Xenophon and Diodorus are in substantial agreement. Both mention three crucial factors: that the battle remained for a long time indecisive; that the arrival of Alcibiades and his squadron led to a rout of the Peloponnesians; that, thanks partly to vigorous support from Pharnabazus and his troops, the Peloponnesian fleet, though suffering severe losses, escaped total disaster. Xenophon gives little further information; the version of Diodorus is much more detailed, but, as already noted, it consists partly of empty rhetoric. There are slight differences between the two versions on the closing phase of the battle. The only one of any consequence is that according to Xenophon the Peloponnesian fleet, after the arrival of Alcibiades, fled to Abydos (Hell. 1, 1, 6), whereas according to Diodorus it was after nightfall when Mindarus put out to sea to return to his base (47, 2), so that he, with at least part of his fleet, seems to have been some distance from Abydos when the fighting ended in the evening, even though he was in command of the right wing (45, 7). This discrepancy has probably arisen because Xenophon appears to have located the whole area of operations too far upstream³¹.

2. *Byzantium*

Fewer problems are raised by the sources for the operations culminating in the recapture of Byzantium by the Athenians at the end of 408. Three accounts have survived: Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1, 3, 14–22; Diodorus 13, 66, 3–67, 7; Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 31, 3–8³². Again the versions of Xenophon and Diodorus are justifiably believed to belong to separate traditions: that of Xenophon is almost certainly based on reports from the Peloponnesian side, that of Diodorus probably on reports, transmitted through intermediate sources, from the Athenian side. The version of Plutarch is in close agreement with that of Diodorus, though he includes one incident arising from the fall of

30 Admiralty Chart 2429 shows a relatively broad strip of shallow water off the Asiatic shore in this area. According to Diodorus (45, 6) Mindarus sailed to Cape Dardanus with all his eighty-four ships, so that, even if this statement is slightly inaccurate, he can have left very few off Abydos.

31 See the preceding paragraph for the location of the battle.

32 The stratagem of the Athenians is briefly recorded by Frontinus, *Strat.* 3, 11, 3 (*simulato regressu*) and twice by Polyaeus 1, 40, 2 (where it is not expressly located at Byzantium) and 1, 47, 2 (where it is attributed to Thrasyllus).

Byzantium which is mentioned by Xenophon but not by Diodorus³³. Plutarch is evidently dependent for the most part on Ephorus. The two traditions on this episode will be seen to supplement one another most effectively: Xenophon deals mainly with developments preceding the final Athenian assault on the city, while Diodorus and Plutarch are concerned mainly with the strategic plan of the Athenians and the successful implementation of this plan. Here the version of Xenophon, though somewhat sketchy on the culmination of the episode, does not lack coherence, nor does Diodorus show much evidence of his addiction to rhetorical battle narrative³⁴.

The siege of Byzantium was begun by an Athenian force under Theramenes, which was later joined by another force under Alcibiades. Xenophon and Diodorus agree that the initial efforts of the Athenians to reduce the city by circumvallation and by attacks on its walls proved very largely ineffective. Byzantium was a powerful city with a sizable population, and its defence was conducted by a Spartan harmost, Clearchus, supported by a substantial garrison. Xenophon alone gives details about the composition of this garrison and, more significantly, about the motives of Clearchus in making the remarkable decision to steal away from Byzantium after taking every possible step to ensure its security and appointing two officers, a Boeotian and a Megarian, to share responsibility for its defence in his absence. Clearchus, who had no apprehension that any Byzantines might betray their city, sought to obtain money for his troops from Pharnabazus and had plans for assembling from several sources a naval force with which he hoped to compel the Athenians to abandon the siege of Byzantium by diversionary attacks upon their allies (1, 3, 17)³⁵. This scheme, which was never completed and indeed scarcely begun, was probably known in detail only to a limited number of senior officers. Xenophon could well have learned about it from Clearchus himself, with whom he served during the *Anabasis*³⁶, or from one of the officers who surrendered at Byzantium and were brought as prisoners to Athens, or indeed from prominent Spartans with whom he was in contact both in Asia Minor and after his return to Greece.

The course of events at Byzantium after the departure of Clearchus is dismissed by Xenophon with remarkable conciseness. He gives the names of

33 Xen. 1, 3, 19; Plut. 31, 7–8. The latter is predictably interested in the moral problem to which the prosecution of the Byzantine Anaxilaus at Sparta gave rise, cf. D. A. Russell, *Plutarch* (London 1972) 126. Accame, *op. cit.* (above n. 5) 375–376, discusses the differences between the versions of Xenophon and Diodorus but does not refer to that of Plutarch.

34 In 67, 6 εὐγενῶς ἀγωνισάμενοι, which strikes an all too familiar note, may be a rhetorical embellishment.

35 Diodorus (66, 6) mentions the departure of Clearchus to ask Pharnabazus for money, but he gives no further details.

36 That Xenophon admired Clearchus, though with reservations, because of his harshness, is attested by passages in the *Anabasis*, especially 2, 6, 1–15.

five Byzantines responsible for betraying their city to the Athenians, and here, in what is virtually an anecdote, he inserts a parenthesis on the trial and acquittal of Anaxilaus at Sparta³⁷. His account of the military operation leading to the fall of Byzantium mentions only that, when the conspirators opened the gates at night to Alcibiades and the Athenians, the officers left in command by Clearchus, having no inkling that treachery was afoot, mustered their entire force in the agora, but, finding the enemy everywhere in control, were left with no alternative to immediate surrender (1, 3, 20–21).

Diodorus and Plutarch provide far more detail about the developments culminating in this surrender. Because their accounts are so strikingly similar, they may be considered jointly³⁸. Their paramount divergence from that of Xenophon is that both record at considerable length a stratagem on the part of the Athenians of which he does not give even the smallest hint.

The willingness of some Byzantines to betray their city is attributed by Diodorus to their hatred of Clearchus arising from his oppressive treatment of them (66, 6)³⁹. The Athenians, evidently lacking confidence that even with the aid of traitors they could take Byzantium by direct assault, put into operation an elaborate scheme designed to hoodwink the defenders⁴⁰. They caused a report to be circulated that their forces were needed in Ionia and, as though abandoning the siege, withdrew their ships and troops in daylight some distance from their positions near the city. Later, however, under cover of darkness they returned undetected, and after midnight the fleet delivered an attack on the harbour, making as much noise as possible to create the impression that the whole Athenian force was concentrated in this area and to divert the attention of the defenders from the city. There the Byzantine traitors admitted Athenian troops under Alcibiades and Theramenes, who had earlier been landed unobserved. At first hardly any resistance was encountered because almost all the defenders had rushed to the harbour, where they drove back the Athenians who had landed from the ships. Half of the defending force now returned to the city to oppose the Athenian troops inside the walls. A violent struggle ensued, which was for some time indecisive⁴¹. Initially local troops

37 See above n. 33.

38 The following synopsis will be based primarily upon the version of Diodorus, but, where that of Plutarch differs significantly, these differences will be noted.

39 This attribution of motive is consistent with the claim said to have been made by Anaxilaus at his trial that Clearchus held back the remaining food for his troops and allowed the local population to starve (Xen. 1, 3, 19; Plut. 31, 7–8).

40 Plutarch (31, 3) attributes it to Alcibiades alone, who could indeed have been wholly responsible. Plutarch tends, however, to credit his central character with plans or decisions considered by other authors to have been the result of collaboration by several persons.

41 Plutarch is alone in stating (31, 5) that Alcibiades commanded the right wing and Theramenes the left. He gives another scrap of information (31, 6) not found in Diodorus: the conspirators insisted that no Byzantine should be put to death or banished after the fall of the city and claimed no special safeguards for themselves.

supported the garrison in resisting the Athenians, but on learning from a proclamation issued by Alcibiades that they would not be punished for having revolted, they turned against the Peloponnesians⁴², who after a stout resistance were eventually overwhelmed. Many were killed and five hundred captured⁴³. The Athenians honoured their undertaking to refrain from reprisals, and Byzantium became once more an Athenian ally.

It has been necessary to dwell in considerable detail upon the tradition concerning the recapture of Byzantium represented by the common version of Diodorus and Plutarch because it has been regarded with scepticism, or even dismissed as pure fiction, by some modern scholars. They have evidently felt that, if the elaborate stratagem described so fully by Diodorus and Plutarch had really been planned and executed by the Athenians, Xenophon could not have failed to make at least some reference to it. This attitude was not unreasonable before the London papyrus of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was published and the dependence of Ephorus, and indirectly of Diodorus, upon that work came to be widely accepted⁴⁴. It has become less reasonable as additional scraps of the work dealing with episodes of the Ionian war have come to light and the hitherto somewhat uncritical confidence in the *Hellenica* of Xenophon has been increasingly challenged. It has already been pointed out that Xenophon devotes very little attention to the final stage of the operations at Byzantium: he gives the impression, as occasionally elsewhere, notably on the battle of Cyzicus (1, 1, 18), that he has to a large extent lost interest in the episode.

42 According to Plutarch (31, 3, cf. 6) the guarantee of immunity for the inhabitants had been negotiated by the conspirators before they admitted the Athenians. There is, however, no conflict with the version of Diodorus because few Byzantines can have been aware of this secret guarantee before Alcibiades issued his proclamation.

43 Plutarch (31, 5) gives the number as three hundred.

44 Scholarly attitudes towards this episode, both before and after the publication of the London papyrus, may be illustrated by referring to the relevant passages in a selection of modern works. Busolt, *op. cit.* (above n. 14) 3, 2, 1559 with n. 3, maintains that the stratagem and the hard fought conflict are fabrications by Ephorus and that only the version of Xenophon is trustworthy. E. Meyer, *Gesch. des Altertums* 4 (Stuttgart 1901) 624, also follows Xenophon in his text but mentions in a note that more detail, derived from Ephorus, is preserved by Diodorus: he does not comment on its trustworthiness. The following scholars summarize the version of Xenophon without including any material from the other tradition: W. S. Ferguson, *Cambr. Anc. Hist.* 5 (1927) 346–347; G. Glotz, *Histoire grecque* 2 (Paris 1929) 741 (though he cites Diodorus and Plutarch in n. 102); F. Taeger, *Alkibiades* (Munich 1943) 211. J. Babelon, *Alcibiade* (Paris 1935) 220–221, combines the two traditions without comment. Accame, *op. cit.* (above n. 5) 375–376, though sceptical about some details mentioned by Diodorus which he attributes to Ephorus, does not expressly reject the version of Diodorus. J. Hatzfeld, *Alcibiade* (Paris 1940) 287–288, refers in his text to the diversion by the Athenian fleet in the harbour, but in a note (288 n. 1) he casts doubts upon its authenticity. He erroneously attributes this diversion to Diodorus alone (cf. Plut. 31, 3) and strangely omits to mention the feigned withdrawal by the Athenians.

The version of Diodorus and Plutarch on this episode is fundamentally different in character from the long passage in the version of the former on the battle of Abydos which consists of empty rhetoric and is virtually worthless. Any third-rate scribbler can produce rhetorical, blood-and-thunder battle pieces which can be adapted to fit a wide variety of military contexts. On the other hand, the version of Diodorus and Plutarch, though including rhetorical touches, presents a credible picture of a complex military operation involving distinctive features seldom found in association with one another: the negotiations for betrayal, the feigned withdrawal, the feint whereby the fleet ostentatiously attacked the harbour to create a diversion, the proclamation of Alcibiades causing a transference of local support to the Athenians, and finally, despite all this intricate scheming, the necessity to engage in a bitter struggle to overcome the resistance of the garrison.

The most unusual of these features is the stratagem of the Athenians in pretending to raise the siege and returning secretly to take the enemy by surprise. The legendary subterfuge adopted by the Greeks at Troy might have been expected to establish a precedent, but feigned withdrawals are remarkably sparse in Greek military history. Frontinus and Polyænus include, in addition to the episode at Byzantium, a few other instances in their collections of stratagems, but of these several, which are not recorded elsewhere, must be considered suspect: only one relates to the raising of a siege⁴⁵. On some important occasions in the course of naval operations the Athenians were the victims of deceptions devised by Peloponnesian leaders: by Ariston at Syracuse (Thuc. 7, 39, 2–40, 3), by Lysander at Aegospotamoi (Xen., *Hell.* 2, 1, 22–28), by Antalcidas in the Hellespont (*ibid.* 5, 1, 25–26). These stratagems, however, have only a remote affinity to that of the Athenians at Byzantium.

If the closely parallel narratives of Diodorus and Plutarch on the fall of Byzantium are largely fictitious, this version must have been invented by someone at some stage. It is for two reasons most improbable that Diodorus was responsible. First, there is no evidence that Plutarch in any of the Lives derived material from the work of Diodorus⁴⁶, whose floruit was at least a century before his: here, as elsewhere, they must be dependent upon a common source. Secondly, the cliché-ridden battle narratives of Diodorus, such as part of his version of the sea battle discussed above, hardly suggest that he was capable of inventing, on his own initiative and without a shred of evidence, all the diverse elements in his account of the operations at Byzantium. On very different grounds the Oxyrhynchus historian may be acquitted of deliberate

45 Frontinus, *Strat.* 1, 5, 24; 2, 12, 4; 3, 11, 1–2, 4–5; Polyænus 2, 1, 16; 3, 4, 1; 3, 9, 36. 41. 46. 50. Several of these passages refer to the same incidents.

46 W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (American Philological Association 1959) 24, do not cite any quotation from Diodorus Siculus nor, so far as I am aware, has any scholar maintained that Plutarch used his work as a source.

falsification. He evidently found dramatic episodes attractive⁴⁷, but even the small amount of his work recovered from papyri shows him to have been a sober and cautious researcher who would certainly not have introduced into his narrative fabricated material better suited to a historical novel and would have been most unlikely to have been hoodwinked by false reports from romancing informants. There is less reason to be confident that Ephorus did not concoct a bogus picture, since so little is known about his work or his methods. His only adequately well-established characteristics appear to be that he drew moral judgements from historical events and that, in contrast to more exhibitionist contemporaries and successors, notably Theopompus and Duris, he was a moderately reliable but somewhat pedestrian compiler⁴⁸. Yet even these indications suggest that he is most unlikely to have used his imagination unscrupulously in reproducing the evidence available to him⁴⁹. It is perhaps possible that the tradition represented by the version of Diodorus and Plutarch could have passed through an intermediate stage of which no trace has survived when the author responsible for its transmission might have inserted any number of falsehoods. This possibility is, however, very remote. While the authenticity of every detail recorded by Diodorus and Plutarch cannot be substantiated beyond dispute, there is every reason for accepting this tradition on the fall of Byzantium as essentially trustworthy.

It is indeed regrettable that the History of Thucydides breaks off in 411 and does not, as he certainly intended, cover the closing stages of the Peloponnesian war. Posterity is, however, fortunate that several writers chose to continue his work with the result that for the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 4th two main historical traditions have survived which are independent of one another. Both suffer from grave faults, but, as the foregoing examination of their narratives on two episodes has attempted to illustrate, they may normally be combined to produce a substantially reliable and intelligible record.

47 Cf. 15 and 20 for episodes in which Conon was involved.

48 F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 2 c (1926) 23 and 30–31, is justifiably cautious in discussing his characteristics. G. S. Shrimpton, in *Classical Contributions, Studies in honour of M. F. McGregor* (New York 1981) 139, points out that such indications as can be found militate against regarding him as a rhetorical historian. It has been too readily assumed by others that Diodorus follows him slavishly and so provides the key to his outlook.

49 Another factor which could be relevant is that, as he must have been aware when writing about the last years of the Peloponnesian war, at least some witnesses of events in that period were still alive and could have refuted false accounts.