

THE LIFE OF THUCYDIDES

by Marcellinus

Translated by
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Thucydides, an Athenian, was the child of Olorus, **1** and his own family was Thracian because Olorus, his father, also had a name from Thrace. He was descended from the family of Miltiades. For on the spot where Miltiades is entombed near Koilei, there also has Thucydides been entombed. Miltiades married Hegeisipulas, the daughter of the king of Thrace.

Thucydides became a pupil of Antiphon of **2** Rhamnus because he was clever and circumspect at speaking in the law courts. On account of these things, they did not hold him back from speaking, but he even took it in hand to write speeches and surrendered to the requirements of practice. Thucydides himself testified to it that he was his pupil and that [Antiphon] might have been a counsellor to him, [when he said] that [Antiphon] was best at getting one acquitted in the courts. But Antiphon seemed to be a base man. For around the end of the Peloponnesian War he was judged to be a traitor, when he was caught advising the best things to the Lacedaemonians, during an embassy to them, and the most unprofitable things to the Athenians. Along with him, they destroyed Archeptolomus and Onomachles, whose homes also were razed, and whose families were destroyed and dishonored.

Thucydides was a man of the general's character. **3** In addition, it was believed that he was wealthy and had great power because of his mines around Thasos. During the Peloponnesian War, he gave cause for a conviction of treason against him from his slowness and petty neglect [in executing his duties]. For it chanced that Brasidas seized the Athenian cities of Thrace, which were revolting from the Athenians and being added to the Lacedaemonians' [empire]. It was necessary for him to sail there quickly and to save Eion, which was situated nearby, in order to recover Amphipolis, "a great possession" for the Athenians. He was able to save Eion by hastening there; but he utterly lost Amphipolis. Cleon, in fact, brought help to the cities in Thrace and sailed over to Amphipolis. Nevertheless, when a

battle was fought, Brasidas, the Lacedaemonian, defeated him, while Cleon died after being struck by a Myrkinian *peltast*. Brasidas was not in fact aware of the victory because he died [shortly after the battle]. Amphipolis revolted from the Athenians and became [part] of the Lacedaemonians' [empire]. The Amphipolitans tore down the buildings [dedicated to] Hagnon and re-named them the Brasidaeian [Buildings] because they hated being an Attic colony. Then they laconized and transferred the honor to [Brasidas] and to Lacedaemon.

After he became a fugitive, Thucydides had leisure 4 for the writing of *The Peloponnesian War*. Because of this, it seems that in many things he favored the Lacedaemonians, while he denounced the tyranny and greed of Athens. For from [his exile] he had the opportunity to denounce the Athenians, rather than to accuse the Corinthians or reproach the Lacedaemonians or blame the Mytileneans; but most of the charges flowed against Attica. He exalted the victories of the Laconians in speech, while he magnified the disasters of the Atticans, such as those in Sicily.

He has stopped the writing during the naval battle 5 near Cynossema, which is near the Hellespont. The Athenians also seem to have conquered there. After these things, he left it behind for others to write – to Xenophon and to Theopompus. And there are several battles in a row after it. For [he does] not [record] the second naval battle near Cynossema, of which Theopompus spoke; nor the one near Cyzicus, in which Thrasybulus, Theramenes, and Alcibiades were victorious; nor the naval-battle at Arginusae, where the Athenians were victorious over the Lacedaemonians; nor the one that was the chief [cause] of Attica's evils – the naval battles on the rivers in Aigos – where the Athenians utterly lost their ships and their hopes successively. For [after it] also their walls were demolished; the tyranny of The Thirty was established; and the city fell into many disasters, which Theopompus accurately recorded.

Thucydides was one of those who was altogether 6 reputable on the basis of noble birth among the Athenians. He seemed to be clever at speaking before he set down the actions in his writing. He first made a demonstration of his cleverness at speaking in the following way. Pylilampes, because he was jealous of someone, slew some male friend among the citizens for being in love with a private man. When this was judged in a trial at the Aeropagus, [Thucydides] displayed many examples of private wisdom

by making a defense for Ppyrilampes and triumphing over Pericles, who prosecuted it. From this he was elected general and was put forward to be *archon* of his *deme*. But he became ambitious¹ in his affairs. To the 7 extent that he became a lover of money, he also did not permit himself much time to put first [the affairs] of his *deme*. First, under the influence of Xenocritus, he was away from his *deme*. Then, when he returned to Athens, he created confusion in the law courts and was captured while attempting to flee. Later, he was ostracized for ten years. He spent his exile in Aegina. It also is said [by some] that he composed the histories there. At that time his love of silver was most evident, for he made many Aeginateans upset by lending money with interest.

It was after the history, they say, that the 8 *proemium* (“The Archaeology,” I.1-23) was composed. For he is recalling [therein] the things that had occurred during the war, such as the purification of Delos, which, they say, occurred around the seventh year of the archonship of Euthynus. He recalls in it even the end of the war by saying, “at the end of this war” (I.13.3). Also, he says in the beginning, “for this motion surely was the greatest for the Greeks and for some part of the barbarians, and, so to speak, for most human beings” (I.1.2).

After completing the eighth book, he died from a 9 disease. For this reason those who say that the eighth book is not by Thucydides, but by another writer, are in error. Coming to his final resting place in Athens, he 10 was entombed among the gates of Miltiades nearby, a place in Attica which is called by the name, “Koilei.” He himself either returned to Athens from his exile, after he had completed the designated time [of his sentence], and came to his final resting place in his private fatherland, or his bones were transported from Thrace after he gave up his life there. For it is spoken of in both ways. Thus, someone set up a marker in Koilei bearing this epigram: “Thucydides, son of Olorus, a Halimousian [lies here].”

¹ *Megalophrones*, also translated above as “great-minded.” See, e.g., line 57 above.