



CHARON OF LAMPSACUS

CHARON OF LAMPSACUS (Gk. Khárōn ho Lampsakēnós), Greek historiographer, son of Pythocles (*Suda*, s.v.) or Pythes (Pausanias, 10.38.1). There is very little evidence about his life and literary production. Accounts differ especially over the precise dates at which he lived. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Thucydide* 5) only lists him among authors who wrote earlier than Thucydides (ca. 455-ca. 400 b.c.) and before the Peloponnesian war (431-404 b.c.). But according to the biographical sketch in *The Suda* (s.v.), he was born during the reign of Darius I (r. 522-486 b.c.). It is also certain that he was active after the accession of Artaxerxes I in 465 b.c., for Plutarch (*Themistocles* 27.1) reported, on the authority of both Thucydides and Charon (Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIIA, p. 6 no. 11), that after Xerxes' death Artaxerxes made Themistocles ruler over Lampsacus. This report offers the only available fixed point by which to date the life of Charon, who is thus usually considered a contemporary of either Herodotus or Thucydides, but a somewhat younger contemporary of Thucydides according to F. Jacoby.

In *The Suda* ten titles of works supposedly written by Charon are listed, though several of them are suspect. Only a few fragments are preserved, however; they have been edited with a commentary by Jacoby (*Fragmente* IIIA, pp. 1-8 no. 262; IIIa, pp. 1-24). There can be no doubt that Charon edited a chronicle of his native town, Lampsacus, in four books (entitled *Hôroi Lampsakēnôn* "Chronicles of Lampsacus") and wrote a two-volume work entitled *Persiká* (corroborated in Athenaeus, 9.394e = Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIIA, p. 3 no. 3a), a history of the Persians, perhaps even of the ancient Near East as a whole.



The only fragment expressly assigned by Jacoby to the *Persiká* (no. 3) deals with the naval expedition of Mardonius, which failed at Mount Athos in 492 b.c. The preserved story of the Median king Astyages' dream (fragment no. 14) probably also belongs to the same work and permits the conclusion that Charon described the Persians' rise to power and took into account the romantic aspects of the story as well. Further details about the content of the *Persiká* and how far the account was carried are not available. Nevertheless, two other fragments, one recounting the rebellion of Pactyes the Lydian against Cyrus and his flight to Mytilene, the other describing the expedition against Sardis during the Ionian revolt, also may belong to it (nos. 9, 10). Both are preserved as quotations (*katà léxin*) in Plutarch's *De Herodoti malignitate* (20, 24), and they permit a sketchy comparison between Charon the chronicler and Herodotus, whose work is much more comprehensive and better informed. The fact that so few fragments of Charon's work are preserved is probably to be explained by the low esteem in which it was held in comparison to the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides. As so little is left of his original writing, it is not possible to assess its literary value; presumably he wrote in the Ionian dialect and in a rather simple chronological manner without attempting to relate events to one another.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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