



## HELLANICUS OF LESBOS

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**HELLANICUS OF LESBOS**, a polyhistorian, probably younger than Herodotus but older than Thucydides (ca. 480-395 B.C.?), who was much read in the ancient world. He wrote on mythology, ethnography, and universal chronology; and he was the first to compile a history of Athens. However, only about 200 fragments of his works have come down to us.

In his four monographs on certain great lineages (*Phorōnis*, *Deukaliōneia*, *Atlantias*, and *Asōpis*), he condensed the entire mythological genealogy in a reductionist manner and in chronological order. Linked to these were the *Trōika* (in two books), which formed the point of departure for the later Troy romances. His ethnographical works were less influential due to their lack of originality, but no doubt also because of the competition from Herodotus. They took account, not only of Greece (Argos, Arcadia, Boeotia, Thessaly, Lesbos), but also of foreign peoples, realms, and cultures (Egypt, Cyprus, Scythia, and Persia [FGrHist 687a]). Hellanicus's most important achievement is represented by the *Hiereiai*, a Hellenic universal chronicle in three books, which permitted the arrangement of 'historical' facts, from mythical times up to the author's own day, by the orientation of its chronological system to the list of Hera's priestesses in Argos. His *Karneonikai*, a chronicle of the Carnean festivals, also probably was 'panhellenic' and chronologically oriented.

The *Atthis* belongs to his last years; it treated the history of Athens from its mythical beginnings to roughly the end of the Peloponnesian War and was chronologically structured with the aid of a list of kings and archons. Thucydides cites Hellanicus by name as his sole predecessor (1.97.2),



criticizing his presentation of the Pentekontaetia (the roughly fifty-year period between the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars). He also made use of the *Hiereiai* (2.2.1, 4.133.2).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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