

Damastes

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Greek historian and geographer of the fifth century BCE, Damastes came from Sigeion in the TROAD: according to the *SUDA* lexicon, which is the unique source for his biography, he was born before the PELOPONNESIAN WAR and was a student of HELLANICUS OF MYTILENE. The *Suda* ascribes to him a rich production, comprising a *History* of Greek events, a genealogical work, a geographical and ethnographic work, and a treatise on poets and sophists: of this production only eleven fragments remain (collected in Jacoby, *FGrH* 5).

Most of these (at least seven) come from a *Katalogos ethnon kai poleon* (*Catalogue of peoples and cities*). This work – which probably corresponds to the *Periplous* (*Circumnavigation*) cited by Agathemeros and, according to him, was mainly based on HECATAEUS OF MILETOS (*GGM* 1.1) – was very important in the successive tradition, if we consider ERATOSTHENES' estimation (which caused Strabo's critical disappointment: 1.3.1, 47). Only one of the fragments (concerning the alleged anti-Persian credits of ALEXANDER I OF MACEDON: *Epist. Socr.* 28/30, in Malherbe 1977) comes from his *History of Greek events* (*Peri ton en Helladi genomenon*), whereas two other fragments come from a genealogical work about the heroes of the Trojan War, *On the progenitors and ancestors of those who fought at Troy* (*Peri goneon kai progogon ton eis Ilion strateusamenon*). Among these fragments, one, cited by DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS (*Ant. Rom.* 1.72), is very interesting: from it we learn that Damastes agreed with Hellanicus in considering AENEAS the founder of Rome and the one who named it.

On the basis of Strabo's testimony (1.3.1, 47) concerning the relationship between Damastes and the Athenian Diotimos – probably the Periklean general who was also navarch (admiral or "leader of the ships") in NEAPOLIS (NAPLES) – Mazzarino (1966: vol. 1, 203–7) advanced the suggestive but extremely hypothetical opinion that Damastes, and not Hellanicus, was the first historian to treat the legendary tradition of Aeneas' journey to Latium and of the Trojan origins of Rome.

We cannot form a detailed idea of the peculiarities of Damastes' works: the attention paid to his region, the Troad, is certain, as are the interests he shared with Hellanicus, from whom, however, he differed in some cases (for example on the subject of the date of Troy's conquest). In the fourth century BCE his *Peri ton en Helladi genomenon* was probably considered as authoritative a source on the Persian wars as HERODOTUS' history was.

SEE ALSO: Historiography, Greek and Roman; Latins, Latium; Logographers; Perikles; Sophists, Greece; Strabo of Amaseia; Troy.

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