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412 Aristarchos of Elis

by Matteo Zaccarini (~~Edinburgh~~Bologna)

Brill's New Jacoby, Second Edition

About this Historian

Historian: Aristarchos of Elis

Historian's number: 412

Attested works: none

Historian's date: 2nd century AD

Historical topic: History, Ancient; Temples; Olympic games (Ancient);

Place of origin: Elis (?)

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Source

λόγον δέ, ὃν Ἀρίσταρχος ἔλεγεν ὁ τῶν Ὀλυμπίασιν ἐξηγητής, οὗ με εἰκὸς ἦν παριδεῖν· ὃς ἐπὶ τῆς ἡλικίας ἔφη τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τὸν ὄροφον τοῦ Ἡραίου πεπονηκότα ἐπανορθουμένων Ἡλείων ὀπλίτου νεκρὸν τραύματα ἔχοντα μεταξὺ ἀμφοτέρων εὔρεθῆναι, τῆς τε ἐς εὐπρέπειαν στέγης καὶ τῆς

ἀνεχούσης τὸν κέραμον· τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα μαχέσασθαι τὴν μάχην τὴν ἐντὸς Ἄλτεως πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους Ἡλείων.

[5] καὶ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν θεῶν τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ ἐς πάντα ὁμοίως τὰ ὑψηλὰ ἐπαναβαίνοντες ἡμύνοντο οἱ Ἡλείοι. οὗτος δ' οὖν ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο ἡμῖν ὑποδύναι μὲν ἐνταῦθα λιποψυχήσας ὑπὸ τραυμάτων· ὡς δὲ ἀφῆκε τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐκ ἔμελλεν ἄρα οὔτε πνίγος θέρους οὔτε ἐν χειμῶνι κρυμὸς ἔσεσθαι τῷ νεκρῷ βλάβος ἅτε ἐν σκέπῃ πάσῃ κειμένῳ. ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ τόδε ἔτι ὁ Ἀρίσταρχος, ὡς ἐκκομίσαιντο ἐς τὸ ἐκτὸς τῆς Ἄλτεως τὸν νεκρὸν καὶ ὁμοῦ τοῖς ὅπλοις γῇ κρύψαιεν.

Translation

It would not be reasonable to disregard the story which Aristarchos, the expounder of things at Olympia, used to tell. He used to say that in his youth, when the Eleians were restoring the ruined roof of the temple of Hera, the corpse of a hoplite ~~carrying-marked by~~ wounds was discovered between the ornamented ceiling and the frame supporting the tiles; [and he used to say that] this man had fought the battle of the Eleians against the Lakedaimonians ~~within~~ the Altis.

[5] For the Eleians defended themselves by climbing up the sacred buildings of the gods and all similarly raised places. This man appeared to us to have plunged there after having fainted from his wounds. And so, when he passed away, no harm would come to the corpse, neither from the stifling heat of the summer nor from the frost in winter, as it was lying in complete shelter. Furthermore, Aristarchos used to tell this: that they carried the corpse along with the weapons outside the Altis and covered it with earth.

Commentary on the Text

These passages are part of a detailed description of the votive offerings found in the temple of Hera (Heraion) in Olympia. The story about the discovery of a body in the sanctuary, a digression in Pausanias's survey of artwork, was perhaps prompted by his mention of Hades (the underworld) just before (5.20.3).

Pausanias calls Aristarchos an exegete (ἐξηγητής), or expounder. Often, in the *Periegesis* the word defines 'guides' of various kinds and degrees of expertise, local or not (cfr. e.g. 1.34.4; see M. Pretzler, 'Turning travel into text: Pausanias at work', *G&R* 51.2 (2004), 199-216, 205-6; C. Delattre, 'Périégèse et exégèse', in Id. and E. Valette (eds), *Pragmatique du commentaire. Mondes anciens, mondes lointains* (Turnhout 2018), 313-44); other authors ~~tend to may~~ call such figures *periegetai* (a noun only attested in Roman times: C.P. Jones, 'Pausanias and his guides', in S.E. Alcock, J.F. Cherry, and J. Elsner (eds), *Pausanias. Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford et al. 2001), 33-9, 34 and 37-9). Sometimes, the moderns tend to consider Pausanias' *exegetai* as 'professionals', but it is clear that their nature and expertise could vary dramatically, and that Pausanias employs the term in a rather generic way (see e.g. L. Beschi and D. Musti (eds), *Pausania, Guida della Grecia 1, L'Attica* (Milan 1997⁵), 399, comm. on ll. 35-6). However, in the case of Olympia, *exegetes* refers to a formal, ~~official~~ title ~~and an official figure~~: *exegetai* took part in the sacrifices (cfr. Paus. 5.15.10) and are attested, among many others offices, by several inscriptions (see e.g. *IvO* 59 ll. 21-2; note that in a few inscriptions these ~~figures~~ seem to be called *periegetai* instead: a brief discussion in Jones, 'Pausanias and his guides', 37). This was not an exclusive peculiarity of Olympia: *exegetai* are found in many other contexts, including Athens, where from at least the 4th century (Plato, *Euthyphron* 4c, set in 399) they represent designated religious experts with the power to expound (ἐξηγέομαι) the laws and

advise private citizens on sacred matters (cfr. Pseudo-Demosthenes 47.68 οἱ ἐξηγηταὶ ... ἤροντό με πότερον ἐξηγήσωνταί μοι μόνον ἢ καὶ συμβουλεύσωσιν.; ~~Qen~~ Athenian and other *exegetai* see R.S.J. Garland, 'Religious authority in Archaic and Classical Athens', *ABSA* 79 (1984), 75-123, 114-6; S. Humphreys, 'The Athenian *exegetai*', in A. Kavoulaki (ed.), *Πλειών. Papers in memory of C. Sourvinou-Inwood* (Athena and Rethymno 2018), 85-96, also considering 5th-century, mostly epigraphic evidence). Therefore, we must regard Aristarchos not simply as a guide (whether 'professional' or not) *in Olympia*, but as a ~~proper~~ religious officer *in Olympia*, whose duties included ~~that of~~ transmitting and explaining local traditions to the visitors.

Commentary on F 1

Aristarchos is one of the few 'guides', and the only *exegete* from Olympia, which Pausanias mentions by name (Jones, 'Pausanias and his guides', 35; above, Commentary on the Text). It seems that Pausanias regards Aristarchos as a reliable, authoritative source (unlike some of his Eleian colleagues: 5.21.8-9; for Pausanias rejecting or criticizing information from other *exegetai* cfr. Pretzler, 'Turning travel into text', 205-6 and n. 38). ~~Apparently, At first glance,~~ the use of the imperfect by Pausanias ~~indicates would suggest~~ that Aristarchos lived and told his stories in the past: Jacoby, among others, believed that Aristarchos was a slightly earlier contemporary of Pausanias and had produced a written work which Pausanias read and reported (see Komm. on *FGrHist* 412 F 1).

However, while rigid rules cannot be established in regard to his use of *verba dicendi* (cfr. M.E. De Luna (ed.), *Arkadika. Testimonianze e frammenti* (Tivoli 2017), 280-2), ~~here as elsewhere~~ Pausanias seems to employ verbs which ~~point to reflect~~ an oral transmission; furthermore, the imperfects in regard to Aristarchos are consistent with the preference for this tense in connection with *exegetai* in the *Periegesis* ("imperfect of recollection": cfr. Jones, 'Pausanias and his guides', 34). In fact, when later Pausanias briefly mentions the same episode a second time, he adds that the restoration of the roof of the Heraion and the discovery of the corpse took place "in ~~my-his~~ own time" (5.27.11 κατ' ἐμέ): as a comparison, consider the nearby description of the discovery, again κατ' ἐμέ (20.7), of objects which Pausanias certainly saw in person (20.9 αὐτός). Thus, Aristarchos ~~is-should be now~~ regarded as a contemporary of Pausanias who witnessed the discovery ~~of the corpse~~ in a relatively recent past, i.e. "in his own youth" (5.20.4 ἐπὶ τῆς ἡλικίας; cfr. G. Maddoli and V. Saladino (eds), Pausania. *Guida della Grecia 5, L'Elide e Olimpia* (Milan 2007⁴), 306-7; however, ἐπὶ τῆς ἡλικίας can also mean a more generic "at the time of", as e.g. in Paus. 5.11.3 and 7.25.1), and later talked about it with Pausanias. These expressions raise some issues as to the chronological and factual structure of Pausanias's narrative: apparently, Pausanias shifts from Aristarchos' account (5.20.4) to his own personal observation of the corpse (20.5 ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο ἡμῖν etc.), then back to Aristarchos (ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ τόδε ἔτι ὁ Ἀρίσταρχος). But how could Pausanias claim to have seen the corpse himself, 'in his own time' (27.11), if it had been buried earlier, in Aristarchos' 'youth' (20.4)? The most convenient solution is to consider κατ' ἐμέ in 5.27.11 as a loose way to refer to a period as long as some decades during Pausanias' lifetime (as ~~if~~ e.g. in 1.5.5), and to regard 5.20.4-5 as an imprecise way to report Aristarchos' words: therefore, the autoptic remark in the middle of Pausanias's narrative (20.5) would actually come from the story as told by the point of view of Aristarchos, who might ~~well~~ have ~~discussed-narrated~~ it ~~with Pausanias~~ during ~~the latter~~ Pausanias's visit (cfr. U. Bultrighini, *Pausania e le tradizioni democratiche. Argo ed Elide* (Padova 1990), 256-61). In other words, Pausanias never saw the corpse but probably heard its story from Aristarchos himself.

Pausanias' second mention of the episode adds that the Eleians erected a bronze trophy within the enclosure (*peribolos*) of the Altis, the sacred area in the heart of the sanctuary: the bronze shield of

the trophy carried an inscription which Pausanias only summed up as celebrating an Eleian victory over the Spartans (5.27.11). Elsewhere, the *Periegesis* seemingly refers to the same event, when the Eleians drove the Spartan force led by Agis II out of the *peribolos* (5.4.8; cfr. also the battle in the Altis against Agis in 6.2.3 = BNJ 416 F 3): Agis's invasion is described in more length at 3.8.3-5, with no mention of the Eleian victory. In any case, the context to which Pausanias alludes must be the so-called Eleian war, dated around 400, mainly known from the diverging accounts of Xenophon (*Hellenika* 3.2.23-31) and Diodoros of Sicily (14.17.4-12 and 34.1; see R.K. Unz, 'The chronology of the Eleian war', *GRBS* 27.1 (1986), 29-42, attempting to reconcile the sources and to establish a chronology; Bultrighini, *Pausania*, 233-8; for a few additional elements see S. Hornblower, 'Thucydides, Xenophon, and Lichas: were the Spartans excluded from the Olympic Games from 420 to 400 B.C.?', *Phoenix* 54.3/4 (2000), 212-25).

Scholars have often regarded Pausanias' version as problematic due to the fact that in both Xenophon and Diodoros the Eleian war features no engagement at all within the sanctuary, ends with Elis' utter defeat, and includes no Eleian victory at any point. Furthermore, Xenophon openly states that the Eleians offered no resistance when the Spartans entered Olympia (*Hell.* 3.2.26). Thus, in order to give an acceptable context to the Eleian victory in the Altis found in the *Periegesis*, Jacoby (Komm. on *FGrHist* 412 F 1) thought that Pausanias wrongly connected the trophy with the body of a hoplite who actually died in a later event, namely when the Eleians attacked the Arkadian invaders in the *temenos* in 364 (Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.29; on the topography of this war see J. Taita, 'Aspetti di geografia e di topografia dell'Elide nelle *Elleniche*', in G.D. Rocchi and M. Cavalli (eds), *Il Peloponneso di Senofonte*, Giornate di studio del Dottorato di ricerca in Filologia, letteratura e tradizione classica, Milano 1-2 aprile 2003 (Milan 2004), 57-92, 78-84).

However, the Eleian war of c. 400 was obviously more complex than what we can get from our brief accounts, as suggested by its duration (see esp. Paus. 3.8.5) and by the **very differences discrepancies** between the accounts of Xenophon and of Diodoros. Thucydides implies that a Spartan invasion of the sanctuary was expected **already in 420, at the time of Lichas' incident right from the beginning**, although it did not take place at that time (5.50.3-4). Pausanias' account on the Eleian war is often regarded as closely following Xenophon's: however, the assumption is misleading since the *Periegesis*, which here seems to adopt a peculiar anti-Spartan tone, provides elements absent from the *Hellenika* (cfr. Bultrighini, *Pausania*, 232-7, esp. 236-8, and 244-6, 254-6). On the other hand, the absence of a Spartan defeat – even a minor one – from Xenophon's account would not be particularly surprising given the strongly philolakonian tone of this section of the *Hellenika*: cfr., for example, Xenophon's failure to mention the successful defence of the *polis* of Elis in the third year of the war, as attested by Diodoros 14.17.9-11 (see Taita, 'Aspetti di geografia', 66-9). Overall, Jacoby is right in noting that, especially once the body of the hoplite had been removed, no proof of connection with the trophy could be left: however, I do not see the point of **attributing assigning** the death of the hoplite to **the fight 364** against the Arkadians **in 364** if Pausanias, evidently on some basis, attributed it to a battle against the Spartans. That the trophy is otherwise unmentioned by other sources on the Eleian war is a weak *argumentum e silentio*: besides, Pausanias **further strengthens his dating of the trophy when he** later attributes **the trophy it** to Daidalos of Sikyon (6.2.8), who apparently was active in the early 4th century (C. Robert, 'Daidalos (2)', *RE* 4.2 (1901), cols 2006-7), **a reasonable confirmation of a dating around 400 for the monument**.

To sum up, as problematic as it might seem, Pausanias' attribution of the death of the hoplite (**and of the trophy**) to the Eleian war of c. 400 is still **safer more solid** than **any** modern attempts to detach the two events. The victory in a battle celebrated by the Eleians **with the trophy** is perfectly

compatible with their ~~eventual~~ defeat in the war: perhaps the Eleians earned an inconclusive victory within the Altis in some phase of the conflict (for a famous comparison, consider *IvO* 246, the Spartan spear butt dedicated at Olympia possibly during the Messenian revolt of the 460s-450s: R.A. Bauslaugh, 'Messenian dialect and dedications of the "Methanioi"', *Hesperia* 59.4 (1990), 661-8). Had it not been for the hoplite casualty, we could even postulate that the Eleian just 'invented' such ~~victorious engagement~~ by simply transforming Agis's autonomous retreat in the early phases of the war, caused by an earthquake (cfr. *Xen. Hell.* 2.3.24 and *Paus.* 3.8.4), into a proper defeat ~~suffered by the Spartan forces on the battlefield.~~

After the body was discovered, it was moved outside the Altis: it is reasonable that a space dedicated to sacred buildings and monuments was not destined to the dead; note, however, that by Pausanias' time buried remains (of past monuments?) could be found by accident within the Altis, when apparently ~~there was~~ no record ~~was~~ left of their earlier existence (cfr. 5.20.8-9). The hoplite was buried alongside his weapons, a ~~normal way familiar ritual~~ to honour ~~the a~~ warrior with his most distinctive tools. From Pausanias's description of ~~the its~~ preservation, ~~of the body~~, it seems that ~~the body it~~ was ~~found~~ mummified. In favourable conditions, natural mummification can take a very short time in temperate regions (from just a few days to several years: cfr. D.A. Finaughty, A.G. Morris, 'Precocious natural mummification in a temperate climate (Western Cape, South Africa)', *Forensic Science International* 303 (2019), nr 109948), thus this detail cannot help at all in dating the hoplite's death.

Biographical Essay

His office of exegete suggests that Aristarchos was a local, but further identification is hard despite the fact that Pausanias seems to regard him as a man ~~with enjoying~~ good reputation ~~and~~ holding an important office. The name Aristarchos is rather common in Elis and in the inscriptions from Olympia: our exegete will hardly be the (barely) attested [ἐξηγητ]ῆς | Ἀρίσ]ταρχος possibly recorded by a fragmentary inscription (*SEG* 15.259 ll. 13-4; likely, 3rd century), but the presence of his name among those ~~attested recorded for among the members of~~ the powerful oracular family of the Eleian Iamidai (late 1st century BC: *IvO* 62 l. 6; on the family see G. Bourke, 'The Eleian mantic gene', *Antichthon* 48 (2014), 14-36) might be meaningful.

From the second passage in the *Periegesis* (5.27.11) Jacoby argued that Pausanias accessed Aristarchos's *logos* from a written source: however, 5.20.4-5 strongly suggests an oral transmission which, coupled with the impression that Aristarchos was Pausanias' contemporary, likely means that no written work at all can be attributed to our author.

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