

Times of War:
The Organization of Narrative in Diodorus and Ephorus

Diodorus Siculus ends his treatment of the Social War by noting that “the Social War, as it is called, had such an end and lasted four years” (ὁ μὲν οὖν συμμαχικὸς ὀνομασθεὶς πόλεμος τοιοῦτον ἔσχε τὸ τέλος, διαμείνας ἔτη τέτταρα: 16.22.2). This brief notice is one of several in Diodorus’ *Bibliothēke* that frame the narrative of a war by providing its formal name and often its duration; see, for example, the Median War (11.37.6), the Peloponnesian War (12.38.1), the Corinthian War (14.86.6), and the Boeotian War (15.25.1). Diodorus is not the only extant historian to frame war narratives in this way (e.g. Polyb. 1.88.5-7), but he does so with much greater frequency—25 times in the surviving books.

A strong case can be made for Ephorus’ *Histories* as the source of these notices. Although Diodorus’ active role in the production of his own work has rightly been reasserted (Sacks 1990; Rubincam 2018), these notices appear almost exclusively in the narrative of mainland Greece and its interaction with Persia from the Persian War in 480 to the end of the Sacred War 346—the portions of the *Bibliothēke* for which Ephorus was the principal source (Parker *BNJ* 70, Biographical Essay IIF). For the many wars fought in Sicily and between the various Diadochoi, however, Diodorus provides only a single war name without duration (13.44.5). We should not assume that everything in Diodorus’ treatment of mainland Greece in the classical period was derived from Ephorus (Parmeggiani 2011: 394; Harding 2021: xxxviii), but a broad trend that predominates there and nowhere else is a different matter.

The case for Ephorus finds additional support in the fragments of the *Histories*. That Ephorus could isolate and skip the Third Sacred War (*FGrHist* 70 T9a) suggests that he did indeed organize portions of his *Histories* by wars. He also showed a demonstrable interest in the

lengths of wars (F216). Finally, Diodorus' notice for the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (ἐνέστη πόλεμος ὁ κληθεὶς Πελοποννησιακός; 12.38.1) appears in a portion of the text explicitly attributed to Ephorus (12.38.1-41.1 = F196). Diodorus was no mere copyist, but in this case, there are strong reasons to attribute his extensive use of formal war names and durations to Ephorus.

Such a conclusion challenges the assumption that Ephorus used only rudimentary chronographic techniques within his work (Jacoby 1926: 101; Parker, *BNJ* 70 F223) and sheds valuable light on how he organized his overall narrative (Vannicelli 1987; Biraschi 2010; Parmeggiani 2011: 155-79). Finally, it points to Ephorus as the first historian to make broad use of a narrative technique that has become commonplace in modern historiography.

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