

Xenophon and Theramenes

Theramenes is one of the most controversial Athenians of the fifth century, with attitudes towards him in the ancient sources running the gamut from very favorable to very negative. The assessments by modern scholars vary just as much. Among the ancient sources, Aristotle and Diodorus praise him strongly, probably reflecting a common source, the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, while Lysias attacks him very harshly. Xenophon, in his *Hellenica*, appears to treat Theramenes' actions during the regime of the Thirty Tyrants positively, but earlier he assigns Theramenes a sinister role in the trial of the generals after the battle of Arginusae in 406. The other episode in Theramenes' career to which Xenophon devotes extended consideration is his role in the peace negotiations with Sparta in 405/4; possibly he intends for us to see Theramenes' conduct in this case as commendable. Although Xenophon's narrative begins after the fall of the Four Hundred in 411, he has Critias attack Theramenes' role in 411 and Theramenes defend his actions in the speeches the two men gave before the Boule in 404/3 before Theramenes was executed.

I will examine how Xenophon treats Theramenes' conduct in these episodes—the Four Hundred, the Arginusae affair, the peace negotiations and the Thirty. I will try to determine if there is a way to explain the apparent inconsistencies in Xenophon's attitude, and also try to explain the reason for the more negative elements in the portrayal. Given what we know of Xenophon's life, it is possible that he had personal memories of Theramenes, but he was probably writing many years after Theramenes' death, and the possibility that he was influenced by sources now lost should be considered. Finally, how reliable is Xenophon's formulation of Theramenes' political ideal—to arrange the *politeia* together with those capable of being of service as cavalry or as hoplites (*Hellenica* 2.3.48)?

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