

Aristotle as Antiquary

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A CENTURY AGO Schliemann was excavating at Troy.¹ The spectacular progress of Aegean archaeology initiated by his work has so deepened our historical perspective that a real effort is needed to remind ourselves how little was known about the origins of Hellenic civilisation as recently as the mid-Victorian age. Without the data of stratigraphical excavation there was no means of fixing a timescale and no independent check upon pictures of the past reconstructed from the remnants of Greek tradition. Historians could follow the example of Thucydides (1.1.3–12.4) in attempting to extract facts from the body of Greek legend, and their reconstructions might even be coherent. But that did not prove them to be true. At the very beginning of Greek historiography Hekataios had recognised the difficulty: the traditional data were suspect. “Many and ridiculous” were the fables of the Greeks, he said (*FGrHist* 1 F 1a), and then went on to rationalise them. But like his successors, including Thucydides, he could not bring himself to ignore them. Amongst the Victorians not even George Grote ignored them; but with logical rigour he insisted on distinguishing between the unverifiable myths of legendary Greece and the ascertainable facts from historical Greece.²

Nevertheless, excavation is not the only source of archaeological knowledge, and historical evidence is not only textual. Men remember that cities once existed in places now empty; battles and migrations are recalled in family and ethnic tradition; precious objects are kept in temples; generations can be counted; tombs may be discovered. Such local lore was cherished throughout the Hellenic world, and local antiquaries already in the fifth century had tried to systematise some of it, but the most thorough attempt before Alexandrine times to gather and set in order facts about the city states was made

¹ For a sympathetic estimate of Schliemann’s Trojan excavations between 1870 and 1890, his archaeological motives, and the significance of his work see C. W. Blegen, *Troy and the Trojans* (London 1963) 24–29.

² M. L. Clarke, *George Grote* (London 1962) 108–109. A. D. Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (London 1966) 63–64.

by Aristotle and his colleagues in the Lyceum. Their work resulted in the 158 *Politeiai*, the *Nomima Barbarika*, and much of the historical evidence used for philosophical purposes in the *Politics*. Apart from the Athenian *Politeia*, the *Constitutions* are known only from fragments, but enough remains to show what a vast amount of evidence was gathered and how intelligently it was interpreted. Aristotle's powers as a historian are often judged on the merits of the Athenian *Constitution* alone. I propose here to pay most attention to the fragments in an attempt to get a more comprehensive view of his historical technique. His methods, as we shall see, were strongly archaeological, and in this respect he continues the early Ionian practice of *ἱστορίη*, enquiry into things as well as into events. To the study of the Hellenic past Aristotle brought, in addition, all the organising ability and the capacity for minute observation evident in his biological researches. But above all he possessed a deep reverence for traditional wisdom, and he knew where to look for advice: in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1143b11–14) he insists that we must heed the opinions of experienced and elderly persons or of sensible men "since they see correctly because experience has given them an eye for things."

He thought that knowledge that is passed on from generation to generation can give an insight into the remote past. In the *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας* he paid particular attention to proverbs as an example of traditional learning. Proverbs, he explained, take us back to the beginnings of philosophy, back beyond even the Seven Wise Men. It was to the Pythia, not to the Ephor Chilon, that Aristotle ascribed the command *γνώθι σεαυτόν*.³ The oldest proverbs survived the catastrophes of the past because they were concise and shrewd, and therefore easily remembered.⁴ Of course it is possible to tamper even with a proverb—Vanessa Bell, for example, remarked that "a stitch in nine saves time"⁵—and one can have too much of *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, but there was little motive for distorting the words of Greek proverbs, and their universal acceptance helped to protect them. Moreover, many early proverbs were fixed by their distinctive paroemiac metre.

If proverbs are valuable to the historically-minded philosopher, they are also, Aristotle believed, capable of yielding vital facts to the

³ fr.3 Ross. However, οἱ περὶ Ἀριστοτέλην regarded the proverb ἐγγύα πάρα δ' ἄτα as Chilon's (*Περὶ φιλοσοφίας* fr.4 Ross).

⁴ *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας* fr.8 Ross.

⁵ Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf* I (London 1972) 131 note.

historian of city-states. A striking example of a proverb referring to the remote past comes from the *Constitution of the Samians*. The people of Samos had a saying *μεῖζον βοᾷ τῶν νηίδων*, “he shouts louder than the Neides”;⁶ evidently the words were applied to noisy persons. Aristotle’s explanation of the Neides comes from the fifth-century local historian of Samos, Euagon, who said that the creatures made such a din that the earth burst asunder (*FGrHist* 535 F 1). According to Aristotle Samos had been an empty waste until the enormous beasts invaded the island.⁷ Some writers called them elephants, and from Plutarch we learn that their bones were to be seen in Samos at a place called Phloion, where they had sundered the ground with their trumpeting.⁸ What lies behind this extraordinary local story? We may be sure that Euagon, and after him Aristotle, knew of a deposit of large fossil bones in Samos.⁹ The bones were thought to be ancient because they were embedded deep in a fissure of the earth, and if a thoughtful Samian recognised a large bone, he could easily infer that the animals made a great noise. One is reminded of the interest of Xenophanes, another Ionian, in fossils;¹⁰ and that a fossil discovery was made in Samos in Euagon’s time or earlier is very likely: for Tertiary faunae are known in Samos as well as at Pikermi in Attica, and the strata of this epoch include remains of the elephantine creature *Dinotherium*.¹¹ The proverb perhaps has a moral as well as an antiquarian message. Loud-mouthed people may unwittingly dig holes for themselves just as, it seems, the Neides fell into the chasms their trumpeting had rent in the earth.

The story of the Neides illustrates another characteristic feature of the *Politeiai*, Aristotle’s concern with remotest origins. He traced local histories back even beyond the appearance of the first men, so that with as much faith as Pindar’s in the truth of myth he described how Delos appeared and floated into position,¹² and how Rhodes suddenly

⁶ Euphorion fr.48 Scheidweiler (Ael. *HA* 17.28). Apostolios 9.51 (2.473 Leutsch).

⁷ Aristotle in Herakleides Lembos, *Excerpta Politiarum* 30 (p.24 Dilts).

⁸ *Greek Questions* 56 (pp.36–37 Halliday), with Halliday’s necessary correction <ἐλε>-φάντων.

⁹ On fossil faunae in Samos, including the giraffe-like *Samotherium*, see Büchner, *RE* 2 (1920) 2168 and 2171.

¹⁰ 21 A 33 Diels/Kranz.

¹¹ A. M. Davies, *Tertiary Faunas* 2 (1934–35) 201 (Mr R. E. H. Reid kindly drew my attention to this book).

¹² fr.488 Rose. Compare Pindar frs.78–79 Bowra.

emerged from the waves.¹³ He also paid close attention to the circumstances in which cities were founded. Hence the large number of fragments mentioning eponymous founding heroes—Kios the leader of the Milesian colonists to the place of that name (fr.514 R.), Kythnos who settled in the island of Kythnos (fr.522 R.), Kroton the original founder of Kroton,¹⁴ and so on; their prominence in the *Politeiai* explains Plutarch's use of the title *Politeiai kai Ktiseis, Constitutions and Foundations*.¹⁵ The beginning of civil society was a topic which had exercised Aristotle during his days in the Academy, for in the *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας* we find him discussing Deukalion's flood and the swimming of Dardanos to the heights of Ida during the Samothracian cataclysm (fr.8 Ross). Dardanos escaped, as the mountaineers and the shepherds are wont to survive when ruin overwhelms the cities of the plains. Aristotle cites Homer¹⁶ to show how rational is the development of society from the nomadism of the mountain folk to the settled agricultural life of the plainsmen. When Dardanos dwelt on Ida, Troy had yet to be founded:

Δάρδανον αὖ πρῶτον τέκετο νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς·
κτίσσε δὲ Δαρδανίην· ἐπεὶ οὐπω Ἴλιος ἰρή
ἐν πεδίῳ πεπόλιστο, πόλις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων,
ἀλλ' ἔθ' ὑπωρείας ᾤκεον πολυπιδάκου Ἰδης.

τὸ γὰρ ἔτι δηλοῖ τὸ μήπω αὐτοὺς καταθαρρεῖν ἐν ταῖς πεδιάδι
τὰς διατριβὰς ἔχειν.

Destructions and cataclysms might happen at any time, by divine or natural or human agency. Homer's account of Agamemnon's power at Mycenae presented a special problem to the historical interpreter. For Mycenae's glory had departed, and Argos was dominant in the classical Argolid. Aristotle's climatic explanation of the change deserves attention, both for its own sake and because a theory of climatic change has been advanced recently to explain the decline of Greece at the end of the Bronze Age.¹⁷ Aristotle's own explanation at

¹³ Aristotle in Herakleides Lembos, *Exc.Pol.* 65 (p.36 Dilts). Compare Pind. *Ol.* 7.69–70.

¹⁴ *Exc.Pol.* 68 (p.36 Dilts).

¹⁵ *Mor.* 1093c. See also, for the study of foundation legends by the earliest Peripatetics, F. Dümmler, *RhM* 42 (1887) 182–83 and n.2.

¹⁶ *Iliad* 20.215–18. Plato had also interpreted the passage historically in the *Laws* (681E–682B).

¹⁷ Rhys Carpenter, *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization* (Cambridge 1966) 61–64.

least has the merit of ingenuity. It is to be found, not in his *Homeric Problems* or in the *Politeiai*, but, appropriately, in the *Meteorologica*.¹⁸

In the *Politics* (1285a11–14) Homer is called as witness to the fact that Agamemnon, the commander in the field, had to endure abuse in the assembly; but once the army had gone out to fight he had power of life and death. An explanation of Agamemnon's military preeminence was needed in the *Politeiai*, and Homer's statement (*Iliad* 2.577–78) that the king of Mycenae led by far the most and the best troops to Troy was a relevant fact. But the climatic explanation of Mycenae's dominance—at least within the Argolid—in the heroic age and of the subsequent ascendancy of Argos over Mycenae had for Aristotle most weight. "As places dry they improve," he wrote, "and those that earlier had a good climate become too dry and deteriorate. This is what has happened in Greece with the land of the Argives and Mycenaeans. In the time of the Trojan war the Argive territory was marshy and so could support only a few inhabitants, but Mycenae's land was good and therefore more prized. But now the reverse is the situation for the reason given: Mycenae's land has become barren and completely dry, but the land of Argos that formerly was unproductive because it was marshy is now worked." How Aristotle explained the epic epithet of Argos *πολυδίψιον*, 'thirsty', does not emerge—he cannot have referred it to the territory of post-heroic Mycenae, but it suited the Argolid in the remote epoch of Danaos, who is alleged to have irrigated the waterless land¹⁹ long before the Trojan war.

The climatic argument would also help him to explain why Agamemnon—according to the Homeric Catalogue of Ships—was content to tolerate a distinct kingdom embracing Argos and Tiryns between his citadel and the sea:²⁰ the king of Mycenae did not need to lay claim to the inferior land in the marshes near the coast, but when,

¹⁸ 1.14 (352a 6–15), noted by Chr. Tsountas and J. I. Manatt, *The Mycenaean Age* (London and Boston 1897, repr. Amsterdam 1969) 18, who remark upon the fertility of land near Tiryns in their time and upon the marshy character of the land lying between Tiryns and the sea.

¹⁹ Hesiod fr.128 M–W. "Ἄργος ἄνυδρον ἐὼν Δαναὸς ποίησεν εὐνδρον (Eustathios on *Il.* 4.171). Alternatively, the Danaids found the water: "Ἄργος ἄνυδρον ἐὼν Δανααὶ θέσαν Ἄργος εὐνδρον (Strabo 371). The line was also quoted by Strabo in 370, as the Vatican palimpsest shows: W. Aly, *De Strabonis codice rescripto* (Vatican City 1956) 13 and 182.

²⁰ For this problem see R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford 1970) 163.

later, the Argive land became drier, Mycenae was no longer strong enough to rule over it.²¹

The close connexion between topography and historical interpretation is well illustrated by a fragment of the Athenian *Constitution*. There was in Athens a place called 'Horse and Maid', a distinctive name which on investigation provided Aristotle with a story enabling him to account for the overthrow of the Athenian monarchy. It was said that the descendants of King Kodros for long ruled Attica, but in time they became soft and lost their royal power. One of the Kodridai, a certain Hippomenes, wished to get rid of the prejudice against the family so as to show that they were fit to rule. (There is no sign that members of another family became kings in place of the Kodridai.) When therefore Hippomenes had caught the seducer of his daughter Leimone in the act, he killed him by tying him to his chariot, and shut the girl in with a horse till she was trampled to death.²² The fragment of the *Constitution* does not show what happened next, but Hippomenes' drastic gesture either failed to win the kingship back for the Kodrid family or caused them finally to be stripped of their royal privileges. If the *Epitome* of the *Constitution* is accurate here, Aristotle wrote that Hippomenes failed to win back the kingship, because the story is introduced with the words "they (the Athenians) no longer chose their kings from the Kodridai because the family had a reputation for wantonness and had become soft." Thus the Kodridai would have already ceased to be kings by the time of Hippomenes. The original purpose of the story was to explain the place name 'Horse and Maid' (where the house of Hippomenes once stood), but Aristotle characteristically gives a political emphasis to it.²³

The story of Hippomenes presupposes a simple change in Athens from kingship to archonship. In Chapter 3 of the *Constitution*, however, we find a quite different scheme.²⁴ Here we are told that the monarchy was replaced in the time of Kodros' son or grandson by a

²¹ It is possible that Aristotle believed Homer to have foretold *ex post facto* in a speech of Hera the fall of Mycenae: Eustathios on *Il.* 4.51 (*FHG* 2.137): δοκεῖ δὲ ἐνταῦθα μαντικώτερον παρακαλεῖν ὁ ποιητὴς τὴν τῆς Μυκῆνης ἀπώλειαν, ἣν ἐκ τῶν ῥηθειῶν τριῶν (sc. πόλεων, "Ἀργους, Σπάρτης, Μυκῆνης) κακῶς παθοῦσαν καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἰστορήκε. ["Quae petita esse puto ex Ἀπορήμασι Ὀμηρικοῖς," Müller.]

²² *Exc. Pol.* 1 (p.14 Dils). For other versions of the tale see Nikolaos of Damaskos, *FGrHist* 290 F 49 (from Ephoros?) and the *Diegesis* to Kallimachos frs.94 and 95 Pfeiffer.

²³ J. J. Keaney, *HSCP* 67 (1963) 139–41.

²⁴ For the two conceptions of the development of the Athenian supreme office in fourth-century historiography see Jacoby, *Komm.* on *Hellanikos FGrHist* 323a F 23, I pp.47–50.

life archonship. Later the office was held for ten years, and later still, annually. Originally, according to Chapter 3, the archons were Kodridai. In this scheme the Kodridai voluntarily resign their royal power; they continue to occupy the chief office of state; and none of them is said to be soft. The scheme in Chapter 3 is therefore irreconcilable with Aristotle's treatment of the Hippomenes story, but since there are independent grounds for holding that Chapter 3 and also the spurious 'Constitution of Drakon' in Chapter 4 are late additions to the original treatise, the discrepancy need not surprise.

Attic lore recalled the end of the monarchy; conversely a Naxian proverb helped to explain the rise of a tyrant. In the *Politics* (1305a39–b1) Aristotle gives Lygdamis of Naxos as an example of an oligarch who became tyrant by championing the mass of the people. Lygdamis' coming to power is described, with much circumstantial detail, in a long quotation from the Naxian *Politeia* in Athenaios.²⁵ Here the proverb giving the key to the story is οὐδεὶς κακὸς μέγας ἰχθύς, "no big fish is a rotten one." The simple narrative and the local colour are typical of Aristotle's historical writing. "The main group of the rich in Naxos lived in the citadel, but the rest of them were scattered in the villages. Now in one of the villages, Lestadai was its name, there lived Telestagoras, who was very rich and of good repute. He was in all respects esteemed by the people and in particular through the presents which were sent daily to him. Whenever shoppers came down from the citadel to buy produce and tried to beat down the prices of things offered for sale, the sellers habitually declared that they would rather make a gift to Telestagoras than let things go so cheaply. It so happened that when some young men were buying a large fish, the fisherman made the same comment" (he must also have said "no big fish is a rotten one," but Athenaios omits this punch line); "in their annoyance at having heard the words yet again the young men drank until they were tipsy and then merrily made their way to Telestagoras. He gave them a kindly welcome, but they abused him and his two daughters, who were of an age to marry. Thereupon the Naxian populace indignantly took to arms and attacked the young men. A mighty sedition then arose, and Lygdamis, who took up the cause of the Naxians, emerged as tyrant of his native island in consequence of his generalship." The narrative neatly conveys the essential political fact: the double tension in Naxos between the city oligarchs and the

²⁵ 348A–C (Arist. fr.558 Rose).

country landowners on the one hand and between the city oligarchs and the tradesmen by the harbour on the other. The alliance between landed nobility and tradesmen proved the undoing of the party in the citadel. Thus the story well illustrates the points made in the *Politics*, that an oligarchy may be overthrown when the oligarchs wrong the demos, and a revolution is most likely if the people's champion is himself a member of the oligarchy, as Lygdamis was.

Local colour is also obvious in Aristotle's version of the novelistic Naxian tale about the noble girl Polykrite.²⁶ She was taken captive in Naxos by an invading force of Milesians and Erythraians (the war is not dated; it could have happened at any time in the seventh or sixth century B.C.). Diognetos the Erythraian commander fell in love with Polykrite, who promised to come to him if he would grant one request on oath. When Diognetos consented, the girl asked to be given the sanctuary of the Delion. Honour and passion forced Diognetos to grant the request, and Polykrite thereupon presented the Delion to the Naxians, who having recovered the military advantage were able to make their own terms with the Milesians. Polykrite was so overcome with joy that she expired. In Naxos people pointed to the place where she was buried outside the gates and called it 'The Tomb of the Malicious One', because Death had snatched away the reward of virtue from Polykrite;²⁷ this local detail can hardly have been ignored by Aristotle, because it rounds off a good story and explains a feature of Naxian topography.

Sometimes, however, the enthusiasm of the Lyceum for antiquarian tales with a romantic setting becomes almost too strong, and a story is told not so much for its historical context as because it caught the fancy of Aristotle and his pupils; if history can amuse as well as instruct, however, so much the better, for Aristotle was no puritan, and he meant no total condemnation of another accomplished historian, Herodotos, when in correcting a misconception he called him *ὁ μυθολόγος*, the storyteller.²⁸ In the *Poetics* (1451b5–7)

²⁶ fr.559 Rose (Plut. *De mul.virt.* 17.4).

²⁷ Plut. *De mul.virt.* 17.3 p.254E, citing *οἱ Ναξίων συγγραφεῖς*. Different versions of the story of Polykrite in Aristotle, in Andriskos of Naxos *FGrHist* 500 F 1, and in the "Naxian writers" are distinguished by P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1965) 93–95. Theophrastos also made use of it in his *Πολιτικά τὰ πρὸς τοὺς καιρούς* (*adn.* Parthen. *Narr.Am.* 9).

²⁸ *Gen.An.* 756b5–8 *καὶ οἱ ἀλιεῖς περὶ τῆς κηΐσεως τῶν ἰχθύων τὸν εὐήθη λέγουσι λόγον καὶ τεθρυλημένον ὄνπερ καὶ Ἡρόδοτος ὁ μυθολόγος, ὡς κυϊσκομένων τῶν ἰχθύων ἐκ τοῦ ἀνακάπτειν τὸν θορόν, οὐ συνωρῶντες ὅτι τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀδύνατον.* Compare Hdt. 2.93.1.

Aristotle insists that poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, but he is far from writing off historical study in saying that. His devotion to fact-gathering about all aspects of the past and his vigorous efforts to discern rational sequences of *μεταβολαί*, constitutional changes, in the development of the city states prove him to have taken history seriously. If historians fall short of the seriousness of poets that was due to the nature of the profession of history. A historian may lack the special inspiration of the poet, but the pure intellectual pleasure of sitting down to work was to be found in history no less than in natural science.

Romanticism in the *Politeiai* is most obvious in the Milesian story of Antheus (fr.556 R.). This youth of the Halikarnassian royal line was taken as a hostage to Miletos,²⁹ which was at that time ruled by Phobios, one of the Neleidai. Antheus rejected the advances of Phobios' wife Kleoboia, who responded by pretending to have rid herself of her passion. After a while, she avenged herself on Antheus. She threw a pet partridge into a well and then begged the youth to fetch it up. When he was down the well, she dropped a rock into it and killed him. Then, still in love and overwhelmed by remorse, she hanged herself. Her husband Phobios, being polluted by the deaths, handed the government over to a certain Phrygios. Even here there is some historical substance. The story helped to explain how a Neleid dynasty fell from power in Miletos; and from the statement that Antheus was a hostage, Aristotle, with his eye for significant detail, could also infer something about relations between Miletos and Halikarnassos.

In this respect Aristotle works in much the same way as any historian of our own time investigating early Greek history; an illuminating passage from a novel by Miss Iris Murdoch perfectly conveys the intellectual challenge to the historian and the importance of an Aristotelian concern for detail: "There are certain areas of scholarship, early Greek history is one and Roman law is another, where the scantiness of evidence sets a special challenge to the disciplined mind. It is a game with very few pieces where the skill of the player lies in complicating the rules. The isolated and uneloquent fact must be exhibited within a tissue of hypothesis subtle enough to make it speak . . ."³⁰

²⁹ According to Alexander of Pleuron, Antheus came from Assessos, a township in Milesian territory (fr.3.5 Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* p.122).

³⁰ *The Nice and the Good* (London and New York 1968) 176.

Let us now consider how Aristotle made archaeological facts speak. Obviously he was not the first Greek to have delighted in the study of artifacts known to be old. The Koressians of Keos, who in late Geometric times venerated a Minoan relic, were prompted by a respect for the past as well as by religion;³¹ the Spartans' purported recovery of Orestes' bones is perhaps the earliest example of politically motivated excavation (Hdt. 1.67.2–68.6); Herodotos had an eager eye for archaeological evidence—think, for instance, of his interest in the slipways and buildings at Stratopeda in Egypt, where the Karian and Ionian mercenaries of King Psammetichos had been posted (2.154); Thucydides had tried to argue archaeologically from the remains of Delian burials;³² and to the versatile sophist Hippias may be given the credit for having added the word ἀρχαιολογία to the language.³³ But Aristotle's use of archaeological evidence is specially impressive because it was systematic.

Coins, weights and measures, inscriptions—all three classes of evidence were made to serve his historical purposes. Thus Aristotle the numismatist explains why the god Ammon and silphion (that valuable but puzzling vegetable) appear on the coins of Kyrene.³⁴ He discusses the peculiar denominations of Himeran and other Sicilian issues (fr.510 R.) and gives the number of *nummoi* in the Syracusan talent (fr.589 R.). Less happily, he assumes that Solon's economic reforms had a numismatic aspect (*Ath. Pol.* 10). Aristotle the metrologist noted, for example, that an Orchomenian measure, the ἀχάνη, was equal to forty-five Attic *medimnoi* (fr.566 R.) and that the vessel or measure of volume called λάγυνος was in use amongst the Thessalians.³⁵ Analogously, he is alert to the historical significance of inscribed texts. In the Tegeate *Politeia* he quoted from a treaty between Tegea and Sparta, inscribed on a stele which had been set up by both

³¹ A statue head was installed ("probably") in the eighth century B.C. a metre above the Late Bronze Age floor of Room xi at Ayia Eirene near Koressos in Keos: J. L. Caskey, *Hesperia* 33 (1964) 330–31.

³² 1.8.1. For criticism of the historian's attempt to identify over half the burials excavated during the purification of Delos as Karian, see A. M. Snodgrass, *JHS* 84 (1964) 113 and 115.

³³ Plato represents him as using the word in the dialogue *Hipp. Mai.* (285D). This is its first appearance, and it does not occur again before Hellenistic times. See, for more detail, R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 51.

³⁴ fr.528 Rose. J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas* (Penguin, Harmondsworth and Baltimore 1964) 172–73, describes the long-extinct plant.

³⁵ They treated the noun as feminine: fr.499 Rose.

parties beside the river Alpheios.³⁶ In the treaty Sparta required the Tegeates to expel fugitive Messenians from their territory, and Aristotle believed that the agreement was also designed to protect the lives of pro-Spartan Tegeates. There may indeed have been a Laconizing party in archaic Tegea; but the key words *μὴ χρηστοὺς ποιεῖν* quoted by Plutarch in fact mean, as Jacoby showed,³⁷ that the Tegeates were not to give citizenship to Messenians. The reason for setting up the stele by the Alpheios instead of in Tegea itself does not appear; perhaps the intention was to warn literate Messenians crossing into Tegeate territory from Laconia or Messenia that no welcome awaited them in the Arcadian city.³⁸

A most valuable, certainly the most disputed, piece of archaeological evidence used by Aristotle was the Olympic discus; upon this object, according to Plutarch,³⁹ the name of the Spartan lawgiver Lykourgos was preserved in writing. Inscribed *δίσκοι* are known from archaic Greece; one notable example records the success of an athlete in Kephallenia.⁴⁰ It can hardly be doubted, whatever the dates of the object and of the inscription upon it may have been, that a discus bearing the name of Lykourgos was to be seen at Olympia. If Aristotle did not himself study it there, he obtained his facts from the work of Hippias of Elis, who had published the Olympic victor list (*FGrHist* 6 F 2) and also had been interested in Lykourgos (6 F 7).

Aristotle used the discus to synchronise Lykourgos with Iphitos king of Elis and with the introduction of the Olympic truce (fr.533 R.). Another synchronism, given in the *Politics* (1271b25–26), made Lykourgos the guardian of the Spartan king Charillos. In a count of Spartan kings Charillos belongs two generations before King Theopompos (Hdt. 8.131.2), who led the Spartans to victory in the First Messenian War.⁴¹ That is to say, Charillos lived in the first half of the eighth century B.C.

Since Aristotle held Lykourgos to have been the guardian of

³⁶ Plut. *Quaest.Graec.* 5 (Arist. fr.592 Rose).

³⁷ F. Jacoby, *Abhandlungen zur griechischen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. H. Bloch (Leiden 1956) 342–43.

³⁸ D. M. Lewis, however, suggests that the inscription was set up at Olympia (*CR* 20 [1970] 254), and notes that Beloch was of the same opinion (*Griechische Geschichte*² I.i [Berlin and Leipzig 1924] 334 n.3).

³⁹ *Vit.Lyc.* 1 (Arist. fr.533 Rose).

⁴⁰ L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) 231.

⁴¹ *Tyrtaios* fr.5 West.

Charillos, we can be fairly confident that he agreed with the sophist Hippias in placing the first Olympic games and the truce, together with King Iphitos of Elis and Lykourgos of Sparta, about 776/3 B.C., in the epoch of the first Olympiad.⁴² But it is hardly to be contemplated that a discus was inscribed with the name of Lykourgos about 776, for the earliest Greek alphabetic inscriptions belong half a century or so later. Indeed, there are signs that Aristotle himself had at one time proposed to date the lawgiver much later than the era of Charillos. For a passage in an early part of the *Politics* clearly implies that Lykourgos was at work later than the conquest of Messenia: "There were," Aristotle remarks (1270a1–8), "long periods when the Spartans had to be abroad on active service against the Argives and later against the Arkadians and Messenians. When they returned to the leisure of peacetime they were predisposed to obey their legislator, having been accustomed to discipline by the military life. It is said that Lykourgos tried to bring the women under his ordinances, but when they offered resistance he abandoned the attempt." Thus Aristotle knew a tradition dating Lykourgos not earlier than the First Messenian War, but he came to reject the low dating because he believed that the evidence of the discus showed it to be false. The alternative explanation, that the discus did not belong to the era of King Charillos but to that of Theopompos or even later, does not seem to have occurred to him. He was content to follow Hippias.

Yet in spite of the combined and weighty authority of Hippias and Aristotle, the low dating of Lykourgos continued to find favour, even amongst Peripatetics. Hieronymos of Rhodes (Athen. 635F) synchronised Lykourgos with Terpander, who lived early in the seventh century, since he was a victor at the musical competition in the first Karneian games at Sparta (the Karneia were instituted in 676/3 B.C.).⁴³ Aristotle himself notes, only to reject it, a remarkable sequence of lawgivers, wherein Lykourgos again belongs firmly in the seventh century, not earlier than the foundation in Magna Graecia of the colony at Epizephyrian Lokroi.⁴⁴ This event was regarded by Aristotle (fr.547 R.) as a consequence of the First Messenian War.

⁴² On the synchronism of Ol. I with Lykourgos by Aristotle and Hippias see H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 60 with n.4.

⁴³ Hellanikos *FGrHist* 4 F 85 (Terpander's victory). Sosibios *FGrHist* 595 F 3 (first Karneia).

⁴⁴ *Pol.* 1274a22–31. In 1274a25 'Ὀνομακρίτου must be corrected to Ἐενοκρίτου (compare Herakleides Lembos, *Exc.Pol.* 60 [p.34 Dilts]).

In the scheme of lawgivers Xenokritos of Lokroi is said to have trained in Crete with the Cretan seer Thaletas. Pupils of Thaletas were Lykourgos of Sparta and Zaleukos, also of western Lokroi. In turn Zaleukos had as pupil Charondas of Katane. Aristotle does not identify the "certain person(s)," *τινές*, who constructed the list of legislators, but we can point to its chief expositor. The emphasis on Lokrian lawgivers and on the priority of Xenokritos is noteworthy. So is the association of *μαντεία* and lawgiving in Thaletas. Now the Lokrian mystic and philosopher Philip of Opous, or of Medma in Magna Graecia, studied legislation—indeed he is said to have edited Plato's *Laws*, and may have written the *Epinomis*.⁴⁵ Moreover he wrote about the constitution of the Opountian Lokrians.⁴⁶ He is most likely to have originated the scheme of legislators rejected by Aristotle in the *Politics* or at least to have been one of the persons who favoured it. It looks, therefore, as though Aristotle, in rejecting the alleged connexion of Lykourgos with Thaletas and Zaleukos, deliberately differs from a contemporary Academic doctrine.

I have shown that Aristotle made continuous, and often effective, use of archaeological evidence. Some of his work is, however, better classified as anthropological, even if he would not have recognised the distinction. As we would expect, much of his writing on non-Greek peoples in the *Nomima Barbarika* and in the *Politics* is anthropological in character, and fragments dealing with tribes of Greek peoples outside the polis-system have more in common with the *Nomima* than with the *Politeiai*. For instance, the statement that amongst the Athamanes of northern Greece the women till the fields while the men graze the flocks⁴⁷ really belongs with such topics as Thracian polygamy⁴⁸ or the kingship of the tallest man amongst the Aethiopians.⁴⁹ Aristotle's expressed prejudices against *barbaroi* (*Pol.* 1252b5–9) are somewhat belied by the intensive study of non-Greek societies he directed in the Lyceum, and even before the school's foundation. The special attention given to Carthage in the *Politics*⁵⁰ reflects a long period of study begun already while he was with Plato, and it is most

⁴⁵ *Diog.Laert.* 3.37. See also G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton 1960) 515.

⁴⁶ Philip's *Περὶ Λοκρῶν τῶν Ὀπουντίων* is amongst the titles listed in the *Suda s.v. φιλόσοφος*. See also *RE* 19 (1938) 2354–55.

⁴⁷ *Exc.Pol.* 53 (p.30 Dilts).

⁴⁸ *Exc.Pol.* 58 (p.32 Dilts).

⁴⁹ *Pol.* 1290b4–5. See also *Hdt.* 3.20.2.

⁵⁰ Especially 1272b24–1273b26.

improbable that the work for the *Nomima* and the *Politeiai* was all done during the years in Athens following the tutorship of Alexander.

Lastly let me draw your attention briefly to three other sources of evidence he exploited. He knew how poetry can be used by the historian to establish facts of political history. Solon in the Athenian *Constitution* (*Ath.Pol.* 5 and 12) and Tyrtaios of Sparta in the *Politics* (1306b39–1307a1) are both called as contemporary witnesses to the civil troubles of their respective states. Secondly, Aristotle recognised in the conservatism of cult a window through which to look into the distant past. So, for example, he illustrates the ties of Achilles with Epeiros in the Opountian *Politeia* by referring to the title Aspetos given to the hero by the Epeirotes, who treated him as though he were the equal of a god (fr.563 R.). Thirdly, Aristotle saw in names a means of tracing the movements of migrants. Thus Antandros in Mysia was, he said, called Edonis because Edonians from Thrace had settled there, and Kimmeris because Kimmerians had it for a century (fr.478 R.). A delightful quotation from the Massaliot *Politeia* explains how a Phokaian trader married a Ligurian or Gaulish princess who took a fancy to him at her betrothal party.⁵¹ In support of the Phokaian origin of the Massaliot aristocracy Aristotle could cite the imposing triple-barrelled name mentioned in the *Poetics*, Hermokaikoxanthos.⁵² The parents of the Massaliot Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes evidently looked back fondly from their colonial home near the Rhône delta to the rivers of western Asia Minor, whence their line had sprung.

In his use of topography, his examination of artifacts, his attention to numismatics, his reading of inscriptions, his anthropology, his study of poetry and of cult, and even in his use of proverbial lore, Aristotle's historical studies have much in common with modern scholarship. Where he radically differs from the moderns, and where his intellectual position seems so irremediably alien, is in his treatment of myth. He believed, as Pindar had believed before him, not simply that myth conveyed truth but that it was true.⁵³ The lover of myth was, he

⁵¹ fr.549 Rose. Compare Justin-Trogus 43.3 for variant details of the foundation legend, and see also the comment of Wilamowitz, *Griechisches Lesebuch II*⁶ (Berlin 1932) 139.

⁵² 1457a35 (p.33 Kassel).

⁵³ R. W. Macan, "Pindar as Historian," *ProcClAssoc* 28 (1931) 44–63, gives the most illuminating discussion known to me of Pindar's belief that myths are historically true. Myths unbecoming to the gods are, in Pindar's view, false, and so he edits them to restore them to truth and morality. An example of such editing is his treatment in *Olympian I* of the tale that the gods ate the flesh of Pelops. Aristotle, however, is concerned to report myths, not to ensure that they are morally improving.

thought (*Met.* 982b18–19), in some sense a philosopher, and poetry being much concerned with the truth of myth was deeply philosophical (*Poet.* 9). In the *Politeiai* mythical origins were inseparable from the subsequent constitutional changes in each city state, so that it was impossible to say that history began with the first Olympiad or after the Trojan war, or before the thalassocracy of Minos. History really began with stories about the gods. Modern historical thought, being insulated from all but secular influences, finds such attitudes to be lacking in scholarly rigour, indeed hostile to truth; but they are a vital part of Hellenic intellectual life. When Aristotle wrote that Keos was inhabited by nymphs, whom a lion chased across to Karystos;⁵⁴ or treated Pandion and Erechtheus as Athenians no less real than Solon and Themistokles;⁵⁵ or recorded that Kephelos the eponymous hero of the Kephallenians mated with a she-bear who turned into a woman,⁵⁶ it simply did not occur to him as an Asklepiad to doubt that these things were parts of history and parts of his own world. That world was full of gods from whom many of his contemporaries traced their descent. To reject all that was said to have happened before the first Olympiad would have been to write off the conceptual basis of Greek historical thought. It would also have meant the loss of an immense amount of evidence from cult, genealogy and local lore.

Nor was the attempt to think historically about the remotest past without gain. He tried to track down the forerunners of the Hellenes, tracing the Leleges from the Megarid through Boiotia to eastern Lokris, Aitolia and Leukas;⁵⁷ the Abantes in Euboia he recognised as a Thracian people who had migrated from Abai in Phokis (fr.601 R.); he knew that the Dryopians of Asine had originated in the Spercheios valley (fr.482 R.); he thought that there had been Karians in Epidaurous (fr.491 R.); and he tried to define the territories of the Kaukonians in the northwestern Peloponnese (fr.493 R.) He sorted traditions, which were all he had to work upon, and we sort our sherds, because often they are all we have. It does not make sense to say that the second activity is legitimate, but the first is not. Thanks to Schliemann and his successors we possess a vast amount of knowledge of a kind beyond the reach of Aristotle; but the real test of the student

⁵⁴ *Exc.Pol.* 26 (p.22 Dilts).

⁵⁵ *Exc.Pol.* 1 (p.14 Dilts).

⁵⁶ fr.504 R.

⁵⁷ frs.473, 550, 560.

of the past, whether we call him historian, or archaeologist, or antiquary, is the capacity to make critical but constructive inferences from the evidence available to him. Because no local detail was too insignificant to be worthy of his attention and no historical subject too large to be comprehended by his mind's grasp, Aristotle the philosophical antiquary passes the test superbly.⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ This essay is the text of a lecture delivered at an open meeting of the British School at Athens on April 18, 1973. A version of this paper was also read to the annual meeting of the Classical Association in Lancaster, England on April 17, 1973, with the title "Proverbs and Antiquarian Lore in Aristotle's Historical Thought."