

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Intentional history (*intentionale Geschichte*) following Gehrke (2001: 286, 297-8; this volume) is the projection in time of the elements of subjective, self-conscious self categorization which construct the identity of a group as a group. Gehrke developed the concept in an attempt to understand the function of the past in the self-definition of communities of Greeks, and has explored this theme particularly in relation to identity and alterity. The phenomenon of 'intentional history' serves as the starting point of this book, from which we move on to explore its ramifications in a range of case studies, culminated by two theoretical papers. The concept can be taken much further to investigate the dynamism of the past in creating the present, of the present in evoking the past, and in attempts to shape the future, because of the prescriptive and foundational value attributed to the past (Gehrke 2001: 300). This also raises the whole question of why it might be considered necessary to locate an event in time, at a specific point or in a much more vague and undefined position, where it might shape the present and future as well as the past.

A key issue is that of social agency in the formulation of ideas, notions and stories about the past, and how these become, or aspire to become, shared possessions of a whole community. 'Intentional history' is never history in a vacuum. It always belongs to someone, sometimes an individual, but usually a group of people, often in the Greek world functioning as a collective entity. And, it is generally set in specific social, political, economic and geographical/spatial contexts. There is a strong proprietary aspect to it. If 'intentional history' is a way of giving meaning to the past, then who gives the meaning? In trying to answer this question, we need to go beyond the concept of 'the invention of tradition' to focus on both the space in the margins which allow creative engagements with the past and the frameworks which make it difficult or impossible to change some aspects of the past. Groups, and identities, are not of course monolithic, and within groups there may be alternative or conflicting versions of those elements of subjective, self-conscious categorization, some of which may ultimately predominate. As historians, it is often hard to determine whether we are party to a conversation between conflicting discourses, whether we have received a particular version of tradition which ignores or overrides other versions, or whether we are reading the outcome of a compromise. It can also be difficult for us to ascertain the degree of agency of specific individuals or groups which can play a major part in the creation and transmission of notions and narratives relating to the past, historical and/or historicizing, in classical antiquity. On the other hand, the existence of frameworks of 'fixed points' in the past serve as a foundation of belief in the truth of the past for most societies. Without such beliefs it would be pointless to invent or manipulate tradition; indeed such waypoints serve both to anchor and to validate narra-

tives of the past. Hence there can be no intentional history without unintentional history.

As historians and archaeologists of the classical world we are not in a position to interrogate the societies we study directly. Instead we must interrogate textual, visual and material remains that are representative of cultural traditions, usually generated by a limited sector of these societies. Hence intentional history must therefore address issues such as genre, which create templates for attaching types of events specific to the particular genre and for attaching events to the names of great men. In tragedy the god Dionysos plays a key role in remembering and forgetting, perhaps in part as the patron or host in a sense of the genre itself (Schlesier, this volume). One could indeed go further to suggest that genre to some extent defines the very notion of an 'event'. Even in visual imagery this is important. Von den Hoff (this volume) shows how images of Theseus in monumental sculpture present a very different aspect of Athens' archetypal hero in a panhellenic setting in contrast to vase painting where he is portrayed in a more local perspective, defeating adversaries as the champion of Athens. Of course different genres may be connected, for example von den Hoff (this volume) notes the power of images to evoke stories recounted in words. In tandem with the impact of genre, later works become contingent upon earlier templates, and in the classical tradition permanence attaches itself to well-established pasts which come to hold authority. The templates provided by narratives of the foundation of cities offer a good example (see below). Di Cosmo (this volume) similarly shows how in the Chinese history writing a set of templates develops into which the discourse of Chinese imperialism is fitted, but these also serve for the 'others' on the edge of the Chinese realm to link themselves to Chinese historiographical tradition.

Indeed, how and what kinds of elements and ideas from the past, both historical and legendary, are (re-)presented in texts, may depend as much on the genre and medium of transmission as on the content of the ideas themselves. The result of this may be the 'de-historization of the past'. Bowie (this volume) has argued that the Trojan War, a key cycle of events in the Greeks' mythologised past, was not a default choice of archaic poets but is prominent, especially in long poems for public performance. The poets who chose these Trojan War themes often seem to be in dialogue with Homer in several different ways. It is intriguing to ask whether these themes derived their relevance in the archaic period because they were believed to be 'the past', or because they were considered heroism *par excellence*? The same question is raised by Giuliani's (this volume) suggestion that the images of 'Dipylon' warriors with their figure-of-eight shields represent not the past, explicitly, but the heroic individual fighter taken out of time altogether.

The Greeks invented history-writing as a genre. Why? Why did they feel the need to create a past from the present and attach it to a tradition? What was the relationship of writing history to innovation? And, were there cultural mechanisms for forgetting as well as for preserving the past? If so, how did they work; what elements did they filter out? Certainly there are no obvious mechanisms that make it easy to obliterate or overcome parts of the past. Clearly there was a strong sense of historical contingency, a view of how the past both actively and passively

shaped the present and future, which we explore further in this volume. The surviving legacy of monuments, commemorations and inscriptions alone suggests that many Greeks aimed to influence the future's perception of their present at the level of both individual and family as well as at the level of polis and community. Indeed, in the earliest self-consciously historical works that we have: the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the past is deployed explicitly in the context of the writers' present, as commemoration, contingent explanation, and justification. Later uses of 'history' in public and civic inscriptions employ these same modes of deploying the past, to canalize the past in particular directions (Lambert; Luraghi, this volume). Further, it is clear that some Greek and Roman historical writers were fully aware of the ways in which political concerns or personal relationships might influence how the past and the present might be recorded for the future (Raaflaub, this volume).

However, for all that the collective imagination of the past formed an important element of many kinds of Greek identities and representations (of both themselves and others), the mundane aspects of time and timekeeping were of limited interest for intentional history. Transmission and succession were a major concern of families for establishing their past and ensuring their future. Yet, the Greeks largely kept track of age, birth, death and marriage not by written records but by discussion and negotiation. This is parallel to the way in which evidence for Athenian jurors was largely a question of persuasion, not documents per se (although documents could be part of an act of persuasion, it was the latter which was pre-eminent). Indeed, written records seem to have played only a very limited role in the Greek creation of 'fixed' history – why the apparent reluctance to depend predominantly upon written records? This attitude is very different from the more modern 'archive mentality' which endeavours to record everything comprehensively, even where the memories may be painful (as in the case of the Holocaust), or where selective and targeted remembering and forgetting becomes a political tool in 'truth and reconciliation' (as in Northern Ireland or South Africa).

The time depth of families was demonstrably short, generally limited to three or four generations before being swallowed up in the confusion of the bilateral kindred. The Homeric image of leaves on a tree which die and are blown away only to regenerate in the next season is developed by Grethlein (this volume) as a powerful metaphor for the power of chance in structuring the kinds of historical contingencies expressed in the encounter of Diomedes and Glaukos in *Iliad* 6.119-236, and is echoed in Mimnermos (Bowie, this volume). However, the falling of leaves and their annual re-growth also echoes the continuous waxing and waning of human generations, representing a kind of time that almost steps to one side of 'history' as we, or the Greeks, know it; where each succeeding generation is the same but different, and the particular contingencies of historical processes may be, at best, only tangentially relevant to the trajectory of events on this scale. Even the patrilineal genealogies on which some groups within Greek societies depended for their coherence usually became unstable (or ceased to matter) after a few generations. The few cases where families managed to resist this instability still left few certain links to the distant past. Lycurgus as one of Eteoboutadai, and

thus with a family connection to the Acropolis may have been particularly inclined to stress these cults as linking Athens in his own time to the more glorious past (Lambert, this volume), but these family links were general, not specific.

Heroes thus stood on the threshold of time between the known and the unknown, as a threshold between ordinary temporality and a vast swirling timeless past inhabited by immortals. For the Greeks heroes were real people who represented some kind of fixed milestone in the largely unknowable past. In some cases they seem simply to have stepped out of time altogether into another dimension. The heroes of Marathon rapidly acquired a kind of poetic stability denied to most ordinary people. Lykourgos and Lysandros were probably equally real, or unreal, to most fourth-century Spartans. The attribution of change, beginnings, or 'reforms' to dehistoricized individuals (real and legendary) whose personas subsequently accumulated events and who were credited with actions which did not belong to them is a common 'historical' technique in Greek thought and writing. Nafissi (this volume), for example, suggests that the Great Rhetra, attributed in antiquity to Lykourgos and the Delphic Oracle in the deep (imagined) past of Sparta was more likely an archaic period invention contemporary with Tyrtaeus, reflecting communal concerns in his world about Spartan social order, the famous *eunomia*.

Similarly, *oikistai* seem to have been real people to the classical inhabitants of the cities they allegedly founded, the beginning of a community's intentional history. Significantly, by the later sixth century, these characters, teetering between the timeless realm of immortals and the world of mortal temporality, were regularly perceived as belonging to particular communities, thus serving as a waypoint locating the social and political community within the cosmos. It is not surprising that such figures become narratives of the past developed by a collective actor. For example, Giangiulio (this volume) suggests that the content of oracles (especially literary 'Delphic' oracles) were created initially in a range of different forms from local collective traditions. From there they entered the (literary?) oracular tradition, emerging from Delphi through a complex series of relationships and processes which served to valorize local communities by inserting Delphic Apollo at heart of their past. This sheds light on the observations of Burselis (this volume) that divine approval in retrospect for the foundation of Hellenistic royal cities in tandem with the development of appropriate mythic heritages followed the early Greek colonial template, making kings into *oikistai*.

We could go further to consider Greek (and to some extent Roman) history as a collection of entities as historical actors, which gives rise to very different notions of historical causation and contingency. From a modern point of view causation and contingency may be 'de-historicized'. Scheer's (this volume) investigation of the Arkadian 'ancestry' attributed by Roman writers to a range of other groups including Cretans, Bithynians and Italic peoples (the Oinotrians) suggests that the stereotype of Arkadians as ageless beyond time and 'primitive' in character allowed them to be easily assimilated to other somewhat marginal groups, providing a Greek heritage that by the Roman period went back beyond the reach of real time. This is comparable to the processes Di Cosmo (this volume) documents

in Chinese history writing, where specific ethnic designations become generalized to mean simply ‘other’ or in Greek terms perhaps, ‘barbarian’. This permits the merger by Chinese historians of the pasts of different people based on similar ‘habits’, and their ‘natural’ otherness.

But notions of causation and contingency were varied and complex in classical antiquity, as they are for us. Grethlein (this volume) presents temporality as subject to forces humans cannot control; it is unpredictable by definition. This opens up a range of different ways of experiencing it: chance, contingency, regularity and development, allowing the past to be used in different ways, for instance as tradition or exemplum.

Raaflaub (this volume) notes that ancient historical writers were aware of their personal involvement in the construction of their subjects, perceiving the past and future as malleable, both melting into the present. Similarly, di Cosmo (this volume) highlights Chinese awareness of political pressure on history writers, seen as a problem for Confucius. Vlassopoulos (this volume) distinguishes four types of relationships to the past which emerged in the eighteenth century as modes of relating the contemporary present to classical antiquity: distantiation, proximity, alterity, immanency. These, he argues, are still the predominant templates for understanding and locating the classical past to ourselves today.

All of these examples demonstrate the continuity of collective responsibility for the past beyond alterity and identity, in part indicated by the need to link different pasts together, or to select specific aspects of the past as especially relevant at a particular moment. The tool of intentional history permits access to the agency of both producers and consumers of these historical enactments as they unfold in their communal settings. Skinner (this volume) thus argues that images on coins may depict a collective shared (often mythical) past as representing the present to the outside world. Luraghi (this volume) shows how historical narrative features in honorary decrees of fourth century BCE and beyond. Frequently zooming in on critical and/or controversial moments in Athens’ recent past, this seems to have been history developed by individuals, but approved by the community, where the inscription serves to ‘fix’ a specific version of community and others. Lambert (this volume), writing of Lykourgan Athens, similarly notes how specific elements of Athens’ fifth century past— victory and the imperial heritage — were evoked and celebrated in the cult in the late fourth century. Worthington (this volume) observes that oratorical sources blame Demosthenes’ bribe-taking while later sources blame Alexander’s desire to send a warning to the Greek for the destruction of Thebes in 335 BCE, when, in fact, the complex involvement of a whole range of different agents seems to have led to this horrific outcome.

Our task in the present volume is to investigate from different angles the elements and the processes of those self-conscious acts of subjective self categorization which, in their broad temporal setting, built the intentional history of the Greek world. Here at the junction of the imaginable and the knowable, we shall explore the Greek invention, in both senses, of history.

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