

'FROM THIS THE CORINTHIANS DEVELOPED THEIR BITTER HATRED FOR THE ATHENIANS'

In 480/79 Athens and Sparta had led the Hellenic League to victory, defending Greece against the massive invasion of the Persian Great King Xerxes. Led by the Athenians at Salamis, the Spartans at Plataea, the Greeks had crushed the invading Persians. Not content with a simple defense, the Greeks then pursued the Persians into Ionia, perhaps hoping even now of liberating the Greeks of Asia from Persian domination.

The Persian defeat led to sharply divergent paths for the two states that had shared the burdens of command. Sparta, always eager to avoid obligations far from home, was traditionally not inclined to hunt down a defeated enemy (Thuc. 5.73.4). Early on Pausanias had led the Greeks against the Persians, but his leadership was too Spartan for the Greeks and they complained. The Persian style of dress and manner that he also adopted proved no less offensive. In the end the Spartans yielded to the many complaints and recalled him home, c. 478.¹

Put on trial but acquitted, Pausanias continued his highhanded ways in the years that followed, immodestly claiming that the victory over the Persians was his doing alone. More serious, he perhaps began to intrigue with Sparta's serf-slaves, the helots.² He may have schemed some sort of revolution in which he promised them freedom and rights as citizens if they would back him.³ Incriminating dealings with the Persians soon after surfaced and the ruling board of ephors issued orders for his arrest. Pausanias fled as a suppliant to the temple of Athena on the Spartan acropolis where he sought sanctuary. Walled up in the temple on the ephors' orders, he was pulled out barely alive. His death (c. 470) outside avoided pollution of the sacred precinct and effectively ended Spartan activities abroad for some time (Thuc. 1.132.5-134).⁴

Athens after the Persians

Pausanias' misadventures and Spartan reluctance to become involved in overseas military operations handed to the Athenians leadership of the Greeks in the fight against the Persians. Spartan leadership, seen by many Greeks as corrupt and arrogant, gave way to the Athenians, who, on account of their democracy, may have been perceived as more open and friendly. Shortly after Pausanias' recall home, the Athenians took the initiative and established a new military alliance, the Delian League, to continue the war against the Persians (478/7). Established on Delos, Apollo's sacred island, the Athenians organized the Greeks for what some imagined would be a permanent war. Rich and populous communities, especially those on the prosperous islands of Chios, Lesbos, and Samos, provided ships and crews in the military expeditions that the Athenians led and became more powerful themselves. Communities too small or disinclined to serve in person were assessed financial contributions. The Persian War veteran and hero Aristides established these initially, his nickname 'the Just' persuading the Greeks that their monies would be handled judiciously.⁵ Later known as *phoros*, or tribute, these monies were paid into a war treasury kept at Delos and were administered by a board of Athenian officials called the *hellenotamiai*, or 'treasurers of the Greeks'.⁶ The first assessment totaled some 460 talents, a vast sum. The Athenians regulated the tribute and kept lists (which were published) of the assessments and how these changed in the years that followed.⁷ So armed and funded, the Athenians acquired incredible military power enabling them to lead expeditions throughout the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean world.⁸

Just as the Spartans faced the challenges posed by a successful wartime leader, so too did the Athenians. In the first years after the Persian defeat, Themistocles, the architect of victory at Salamis, dominated the city and engineered its recovery. He foiled a Spartan attempt to dissuade the Athenians from rebuilding their city walls, which would have left the city vulnerable to future attack. But the fickleness of the Athenian democracy, the jealousies a successful figure like Themistocles faced from enemies eager to see him fall, led to his political eclipse. In about 474/3 the Athenians ostracized him and the vote may have been rigged.⁹ In 1937 a hoard of ostraca, or voting tokens, was found in an old well on the acropolis of Athens. Of some 191 pieces, all but one bore his name. Upon study only fourteen different hands could be read, evidence that a group of his enemies had surely

gathered, written out the ostraca and then handed them out on voting day.¹⁰ There is no way of knowing if these ostraca date from 474/3 or not, but they clearly indicate that Themistocles had enemies and that they were organized. Bound by the law, Themistocles left Athens and for a time resided in nearby Euboea. But then he too was caught up in the Pausanias scandal and fled to Asia where the new Great King, Artaxerxes I, son of his late rival Xerxes, gave him shelter. His former enemies welcomed him warmly and years later Themistocles died an honored exile.¹¹

Themistocles, however, had his defenders in Athens and not long after his ostracism, one of them, the Marathon veteran and playwright Aeschylus, reminded the Athenians of Themistocles' service to the state. His drama *Persians*, staged in 472/1, not only commemorated the victory over the enemy, but indirectly praised the now dishonored Themistocles. Interesting too is the identity of the *choregos*, the individual responsible for providing the chorus with costumes and training. Pericles, son of Xanthippus and a wartime ally of Themistocles and scion of Athens' grandest family, made his public debut as Aeschylus' benefactor, subtly showing too where his political sympathies lay.¹²

By 467/6, some members of the Delian League began tiring of wartime life as the Persian threat receded: there seemed little reason for a military alliance, forged in the euphoria of victory, to continue. Such was the case with Naxos, an island state, which now withdrew from the alliance. The Athenians, however, did not see things this way. When making their agreement, members of the new league had ceremoniously dumped into the sea lumps of iron and pledged that until the iron floated, they would remain loyal to their oaths of membership. The Athenians saw the Naxians as oath-breakers and so responded with great force. Attacked and subdued by veteran Athenian forces, the Naxians were compelled to dismantle their city-wall and pay penalties as they were forced back into the League.¹³ The allies, quickly becoming subjects now, could see that Athens would not negotiate or arbitrate any differences: there was little choice for them other than acquiescence to Athens' greater power.¹⁴

Naxos, however, was not the only state unhappy with the growing arrogance of power displayed by the Athenians. In 465 another island state, Thasos, broke its association with the League, as the Athenians encroached on its mainland holdings – rich in gold and silver. For some three years the Athenians assailed the island, finally subduing it and forcing it back into the League. Like Naxos, Thasos suffered severe punishment. But there

were other casualties as well. Enemies of Cimon, who had commanded the Athenian forces in the campaign, prosecuted but failed to convict him of corruption.¹⁵ Less fortunate were the Athenian settlers later introduced as colonists into the disputed region. Occupying a township known as Ennea Hodoi, the 'Nine Ways', the colonists were attacked by the local Thracian population and virtually annihilated, frustrating Athenian hopes of expansion (Thuc. 4.102.2).

Sometime around 466 the Athenian-led campaign against the Persian menace finally struck a decisive blow. At the Eurymedon River in Asia Minor, the Athenians and their allies led by Cimon destroyed a combined Persian fleet and army, thereby ending any chance of the Persians returning to Aegean waters. Cimon may have reached a settlement with the Persians, but by 460 he was in exile, ostracized, after an abortive expedition to Sparta. The Athenians now began flexing their military muscle throughout the eastern Mediterranean world. An expeditionary force to Cyprus was diverted to Egypt to support the rebellion of the Libyan prince Inarus. Fighting here lasted through several campaigning seasons and the Athenians invested a great deal of money and resources. In the end the Persians scored a major success, diverting the waters of the Nile and marooning the Athenian ships, then destroying them (c. 454).¹⁶

As these dramatic events unfolded, the Athenian political scene heralded a new arrival – Pericles. Known by name and reputation, his political sympathies were revealed c. 462/1 when he supported the efforts of the reformer Ephialtes to strip the old aristocratic council, the Areopagus, of its authoritative judicial powers.¹⁷ In attacking the Areopagus Council, Ephialtes transferred its power and prestige to other and more popular bodies, the assembly, law courts, and Council of 500. Responses to the reforms were impassioned and cost Ephialtes his life, though the details are far from clear (Plut. *Per.* 10.7-8). These events, however, found their way into the popular imagination through the dramatic medium of Attic drama. In 458 Aeschylus staged the only surviving trilogy in Greek tragedy, the *Oresteia*. In its final play, *Eumenides*, Aeschylus warns of the dangers of civil war and how this worst of political evils must be avoided.

Did Aeschylus make a political statement, and if so who heard his message? While the political nature of the dramatic venue can be overstated, so much so that the rich matrix of intellectual and spiritual ideas and beliefs is overshadowed, it remains that the theater experience was a diverse one with real and contemporary issues sometimes at play.¹⁸ Here the Athenians heard the views and opinions of their best minds, who asked

them to think about the world around them and to act as informed citizens. It must also be seen that those who heard these words were almost certainly the minority. The Theater of Dionysus, where Aeschylus' *Oresteia* was performed, as later the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, was apparently not large and may have accommodated no more than the local theater in Thorikos.¹⁹ In many ways, then, the theater experience was an elite experience. It did voice political concerns about the community and its political figures, but those who heard it represented a relatively small portion of the population.

In the turmoil of Ephialtes' reforms and death, and fighting raging in many corners, the Athenians, apparently with Pericles' backing, recalled Cimon from exile (c. 452?). A new Persian fleet threatened Greek communities and Athenian influence in the eastern Mediterranean, and Cimon led an expeditionary force to Cyprus but died not long after arriving (c. 451/0). His death, preceded by the setback in Egypt, led to a settlement between Greeks and Persians. Brokered by Callias, Cimon's brother-in-law, these decade-old enemies signed the so-called Peace of Callias probably in summer 450/449. Three decades of hostilities with the Persians now ended.²⁰

As Athens acquired great power so too did it acquire great wealth. Possibly in 454 and because of the failure of the Egyptian expedition, the treasury of the Delian League was moved to Athens. Within a short time, c. 449, the Athenians were rebuilding their city, something they had deliberately delayed since the end of the Persian Wars. In the 'Oath of Plataea' the Greeks had agreed not to rebuild their ruined sanctuaries and now with peace came a great building boom in Athens.²¹

In the decade that followed, the Athenians would have seen their city transfigured from a war-ruined wreck to an architectural showcase reflecting the power of imperial Athens. Pericles, dubbed 'Olympian' by his critics (Plut. *Per.* 8.4), took a keen interest in the designing of buildings and shaping of sculpture, and perhaps sat on a commission that supervised the whole program.²² His 'Olympian' size ego no doubt prompted many artistic suggestions too. But it appears that his friend, the great sculptor Phidias, acted as the overall director of the rebuilding of the acropolis. Already he had crafted the great statue of Athena Promachos that greeted visitors to the acropolis (c. late 450s). Later he designed the gold and ivory cult statue of Athena Parthenos herself that would be placed in her rebuilt temple, the Parthenon, designed by Callicrates and Ictinus (built 447–432).²³ Later

Phidias got into trouble. Charged with embezzling funds, and despite help from Pericles, he fled into exile (Plut. *Per.* 31.1-5).

Elsewhere Mnesicles built a new gateway to the acropolis, the Propylaea, while below it stood the Odeon, a circular music hall that took its inspiration from the pavilion of the Persian king seized at Plataea some thirty years before. Similar rebuilding took place at the sacred precinct at Eleusis where the important Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone were celebrated.²⁴

Not all saw these expenditures as just, since much of the money funding this program came from the allied contributions, now deposited in Athens. Pericles' influence over the city came to be seen by other Athenians as a threat. Chief among these critics was Thucydides, the son of Melesias, a relative of Cimon, who now mounted a challenge to Pericles' leadership. Perhaps for the first time, organized 'party' politics were practiced in the assembly. Thucydides grouped his followers together so that they could present a single voice, literally, in assembly debate. Both men were talented speakers and effective politicians, and their rivalry attracted even the attention of Archidamus, the Spartan king. Once asking Thucydides who the better wrestler was, Thucydides replied that 'whenever I throw him at wrestling, he beats me by arguing that he was never down, and he can even make the spectators believe it!' (Plut. *Per.* 8).

In the end Pericles prevailed. He counterattacked forcefully, arguing that the allies did not contribute men or material to the defense of Greece from renewed Persian attack. Additionally, Athenians from all walks of life were profiting not only from military service but from the many jobs and work springing up from the vast program of public works. The wealth and power that Athens accrued also empowered the democracy, as payments were handed out for jury service as well as attendance at public festivals, making possible the participation of many more citizens in the political process. Against the growing prosperity of Athens, Thucydides could not compete. Pericles secured his ostracism (c. 443/3) and though he later returned, his political influence seems spent.²⁵

Thucydides' departure may not have bothered many Athenians who could look around their city and see everywhere the fruits of their labors and their sacrifices made good. Complacent and satisfied, however, the Athenians were not and those like Pericles knew that such hard won gains could be lost just as quickly.

Sparta after the Persians

As Athens grew powerful and wealthy – and just a little cocky – the Spartans watched from their safe haven deep in the Eurotas river valley of the Peloponnesus. Content to remain at home since the Pausanias affair, the Spartans were more concerned with the ever menacing presence of the helots. Critical to this control was their dominance over their neighbors, most of whom were members of the military alliance that Sparta led, the Peloponnesian League.

But in c. 464 disaster struck: an earthquake of tremendous force left virtually every house and building in Sparta destroyed. Striking in daylight, loss of life was severe, including a school full of boys of elite status. Only a few of these survived, having run after a rabbit that appeared moments before the earthquake struck, killing most still inside. Years later remains of the school, now the tomb of those killed, the *Seismatias*, remained a visible reminder of the tragedy (Plut. *Cim.* 16.5).

The Messenian helots, ever dangerous, quickly seized the moment and rose in rebellion, pressing the Spartans hard. Establishing a formidable position on Mt. Ithome, the Messenians repelled successive Spartan attacks. In one of these Arimnestus, Mardonius' killer at Plataea, died with three hundred others in the battle of Stenyclerus, having taken on the Messenians unaided (Hdt. 9.64.2). So severe was the situation that the Spartans appealed to the Athenians for aid. A lone Spartan envoy appeared before the Athenians, a simple and silent suppliant. Moved by this appeal, Cimon led a thousand Athenian volunteers to rescue the Spartans. Soon after arriving, however, the Spartans worried about their would-be saviors. Perhaps afraid that the democratic Athenians might switch sides and help the Messenians, the Spartans told the Athenians that their help was no longer required.

This Spartan volte-face ruined Cimon's stature in Athens and explains the circumstances of his ostracism (c. 461) engineered by his opponents. When fighting with the Spartans flared up and that with the Persians soured in Egypt and the east, Pericles and others called him home, soon sending him off to Cyprus where he died campaigning. But before his death he managed to bring about a five-year peace between Athens and Sparta (c. 452/1). This was only a temporary cessation in the hostilities. Relations between the two states would harden considerably in the following years.²⁶

But the Spartans still needed help against the Messenians and called in assistance from other communities, perhaps thought more trustworthy than the Athenians. The struggle with the helots, especially those of Messenia continued for years.²⁷ Those Messenians holding out in their mountain stronghold on Ithome (as late as 456?) finally agreed to terms with the Spartans, only too happy to grant their safe exit. The Messenians found protection with Athenians who were just as happy to settle these battle-hardened veterans at Naupactus, a port in Ozolian Locris, which guarded the northern approaches to the Corinthian Gulf (Thuc. 1.103.1-3).

After the Persian Wars, Athens and Sparta had taken divergent paths. Sparta remained an old-fashioned tribal community whose goal focused on preserving the status quo – maintaining control over the Peloponnesians to ensure control over the helots. Athens, however, was becoming increasingly a ‘modern’ state where, as Pericles emphasizes in Thucydides, democracy had reshaped its citizens into lovers of the *polis*.²⁸ Democratic institutions established at the end of the sixth century continued to be expanded and refined throughout the fifth – magistrates with defined tenures of office, a functioning assembly that wielded real authority, law courts and juries that expressed the will of the people.²⁹ To maintain this development – and the wealth of empire that came with it – Athens had to stay the course, to exercise power and authority wherever possible.³⁰

But this Athenian reality may be expanded. Political scientist John Mearsheimer has argued that democratic states are as driven by power politics as their authoritarian counterparts and practice similar policies of aggression. Such analysis fits democratic Athens in the middle years of the fifth century. In stark contrast to slow and ‘conservative’ Sparta, as the Corinthians emphasized in an illuminating comparison (Thuc. 1.70), Athens constantly looked for opportunity wherever it could be found. The tensions between these two states were not only between a ‘land’ power and a ‘sea’ power, but between two communities that for more than two generations had been heading in opposite directions.³¹

The ‘First’ Peloponnesian War

By 460 Athens and Sparta were distracted by various problems both at home and abroad. This opened the door to the growing ambitions of Corinth, which now saw an opportunity to assert its wealth and greater

strength against neighboring Megara, close on the Attic frontier. Though a member of the Peloponnesian League, Megara found itself isolated. The Spartans, pre-occupied with the helot revolt, had neither the resources nor the inclination to rein in the Corinthians. Moreover, the Spartans usually took notice of the aggressions of their allies only when these threatened their own interests and Megara was far away and small.

Abandoned and threatened, the Megarians appealed to Athens for support. They were not denied. The Athenians quickly saw an opportunity to expand their influence not only close to home but at Corinthian expense. The Athenians helped the Megarians in building their own long walls, connecting their city to its port of Nisaea. Corinth and Athens, one-time friends, now fought in earnest for control of Megara.³² The conflict soon spread and before long became a wider conflict, now called the 'First' Peloponnesian War.³³

In 458 a combined Spartan and Boeotian army inflicted a sharp defeat on the Athenians at Tanagra. Soon after the Athenians recovered and defeated the Boeotians at Oenophyta, gaining a foothold in central Greece. The settlements brokered by Cimon and Callias brought some quiet, but some ten years later the Athenians attempted to expand their influence in Boeotia (447/6). Incited by the daring of the impetuous Tolmides, they approved the dispatch of a large expeditionary force into Boeotia, including a thousand volunteers personally recruited by the commander. Pericles warned Tolmides, who bore the ill-omened name 'the daring one', not to live up to his name, but the advice was wasted. Tolmides' force was beaten badly at Coronea. Many brave Athenians fell, including Clinias, an ally and associate of Pericles who now assumed responsibility for raising Clinias' sons Alcibiades and Clinias. That job would not be easy. The Boeotians captured a number of other Athenians, whom they released only when the Athenians agreed to abandon their interests in Boeotia.³⁴ Now liberated from Athenian domination, the Boeotians created a political union of their own, the Boeotian Confederacy. A formidable rival, and one with a long memory of hostility, now stood on Athens' northern frontier.³⁵

Tolmides' defeat sparked a revolt of Athenian allies on the nearby island of Euboea, an important supplier of foodstuffs of all kinds and much more. This setback incited a political coup in Megara that brought the city back into the Corinthian and Spartan orbit. The Spartans, perhaps encouraged by these events, sent the Agiad king Pleistoanax with a large force against Athens. But after ravaging Athenian territory around Eleusis, Pleistoanax suddenly ceased operations and turned his army homewards. Even at the

time it was believed that Pericles had successfully bribed the young king's chief adviser, Cleandridas, who engineered the Spartan withdrawal. Later, when submitting his annual report, Pericles reportedly explained a missing twenty talents as expended 'for what was necessary'. Aristophanes later joked of this in his play *Clouds* and a commentator would later explain the line as a subterfuge for 'I gave the money to the king of Sparta'. Word of this leaked out to the Spartan authorities and Pleistoanax's enemies prosecuted him, seizing his property and imposing a hefty fine of fifteen talents.³⁶ Unable to pay he went into exile and his more malleable son Pausanias, a child, replaced him. Cleandridas, already in voluntary retirement, was condemned to death. Not only are domestic politics involved here, but also attitudes regarding relations between Athens and Sparta. The family of Pleistoanax may have been too well disposed to Athens for some Spartans.³⁷

Pleistoanax's convenient change of heart allowed Pericles to return to the suppression of the Euboean revolt, which he achieved. Not long after the warring states negotiated a settlement, the 30 Years Peace of 446/5.³⁸ While a general calm now swept over Greece, the 'First' Peloponnesian War succeeded in creating lingering animosity for Athens, especially in Corinth: Spartan anxieties were no less.

The Samian War and Athenian Power

There can be little doubt that Athenian ambitions and aggressions worried many, not least the Spartans, some of whom began to fear that control over their own allies might weaken and with dire consequences.³⁹ The long and brutal fight with the helots was all the reminder any Spartan needed of the importance of the allies. And there seems to be reason for such fears. Not long after the peace was agreed upon, c. 442/1, Athens became involved in a bitter dispute between Samos and Miletus over the control of Priene, a city near both on the Asia Minor coast. The Samians refused an Athenian offer to arbitrate the dispute before an Athenian court and afterwards Athens chose to support Miletus (Thuc. 1.115.2-117; Plut. *Per.* 25.1).

Critics and comic poets alike now had a field day with Pericles and his Milesian born mistress Aspasia. Only a few years before Pericles had divorced his wife and the mother of his two sons Xanthippus and Paralus to live with Aspasia whom he apparently adored – kissing her on leaving

and returning home. Rumors now went around Athens that policies were being determined to please her. Perhaps leading the attack was Cratinus who nicknamed Pericles the 'Olympian'. Nastier attacks fell on Aspasia. Pericles' own citizenship law (451/0) would have made legal marriage with her impossible, which meant they could do no more than cohabit. This opened the door to the comic poets to label her a whore and worse. The jokes and innuendo were no doubt crude and funny but they may have backfired – within a matter of months a decree restricting comic ridicule was passed, surely intended to protect the 'imperial' couple.⁴⁰

Pericles intervened on Samos with a large force and dissolved the oligarchic regime, taking as hostage fifty leading citizens along with a like number of children.⁴¹ These were then taken to Lemnos for safe-keeping. The Samians remained defiant. With the help of the Persian satrap Pisuthnes at Sardis and the people of Byzantium, who now joined them in rebellion, they recovered their hostages and prepared for war.⁴²

For more than a year Pericles and the Athenians took the fight to the Samians, but it was not easy going. Both sides won several rounds and each resorted to terror tactics: the Samians tattooed Athenian prisoners with the *samaina*, the symbol of their own locally produced coinage now banned, this in retaliation for their own people tattooed by the Athenians with the mark of Athena's owl. Aristophanes possibly joked about this later in his play *Babylonians*, referring to the Samians as a 'many lettered people'.⁴³

Pericles pressed a siege of Samos for nine months and in the end the city finally surrendered (summer 439). Sometime later the Samians accepted an Athenian imposed treaty, one extracting complete loyalty and a promise not to rebel against Athens again. While costly, the victory was heady stuff and rumors later went around Athens that Pericles was bragging that he had accomplished in nine months what took Agamemnon ten years. But such bitter fighting left the Athenians in a foul mood and they brutally suppressed Samos. Not only was the Samian pro-democratic regime buttressed, but enemies were eliminated. Pericles also ordered an atrocious punishment: the ships' captains and marines of the Samian fleet were brought to Miletus where they were crucified in the market. Ten days later those still alive were taken down and beaten to death.⁴⁴

The number of men so punished is difficult to estimate: but the Samian fleet numbered at least seventy warships which would yield at least that number of ships' captains plus another seven hundred marines minimally.⁴⁵ Allowing for even twenty-five percent casualties (a high figure), this would have placed at Pericles' mercy nearly six hundred men. Their

public execution and humiliation – all taking place in an allied city – would have sent a clear message to all the Greeks and not just Athenian allies – beware the power of Athens.

This vicious act may have provided the inspiration for one of the greatest of Athenian dramas, Sophocles' *Antigone*. During the Samian War, Sophocles may have served as general on two occasions, serving with Pericles, who probably acted as 'senior' commander among the Athenian generals.⁴⁶ But relations between the two may not have been cordial and for several reasons. Sophocles seems to have had more than a passing interest in good-looking boys and a remark by him about an especially pretty one earned him a Periclean rebuke (Plut. *Per.* 8.8). A few years before the outbreak of war, Sophocles had served as *hellenotamias*, one of the treasurers who handled the finances of empire.⁴⁷ His ideas of Athenian conduct regarding the allies may have been more in line with the views of Thucydides, son of Melesias, than Pericles. Sophocles would have found Pericles' hard-line stance with the Samians disagreeable.

Then there is the business of the vicious killings of the Samian officers and marines. This and Pericles' increasing high-handed manner may have energized Sophocles and prompted him to make a not too subtle comment on these events. Drawing from the legendary Theban cycle and lives of Oedipus and his children, Sophocles spun a tale of war's brutalities and the nature of imperial rule producing the *Antigone* probably at the City Dionysia in 438.⁴⁸ Attended by Athenians and allies alike, the Dionysia also witnessed the staging of allied tribute and the debuts of war orphans raised at public expense. With its prominent discussion of the dishonored dead and an imperious ruler incapable of wrong, the *Antigone* reflects on the wielding of power and dispensing of justice, all cloaked in the mythology of the family of Oedipus.

Readers of *Antigone* will know that the play begins with Antigone and her sister lamenting the fate of their brother Polynices, whose body is to lie unburied at Creon's order. Within a few lines of this opening scene, Antigone addresses Creon as *strategos*, and surely this would have raised some eyebrows, as it was the same rank that Pericles held in these years and with which he dominated the city.⁴⁹ Ironically, Antigone calls Creon 'good' a few lines later.⁵⁰ Readers of *Antigone* will also recall that in the drama Creon seems more concerned with his personal authority than with the opinions of his (fellow) citizens as the famous debate with his son Haemon demonstrates: 'Since when do I take my orders from the people of Thebes!'⁵¹



Figure 1.1 This fragmentary Athenian casualty list preserved not only the memory of these men heroic in death, but also their sacrifice for the wider community, shaping ideas of the common good and even patriotism.

The arrogance Sophocles imputes to Creon matches the unpopular image of Pericles found among contemporaries such as Ion of Chios and Teleclides, who nicknamed him and his cronies ‘the new Pisistratids’, challenging the ‘Olympian’ as well to take an oath not to become tyrant (Plut. *Per.* 5.3, 16.1-2). Such criticisms provide a broader context to Sophocles’ *Antigone* and make clearer the play’s commentary on Pericles, his leadership of Athens, and his harsh suppression of Samos.

Others expressed their disagreement with Pericles’ leadership and conduct of the recent war too. Elpinice, Cimon’s sister, took advantage of the public funeral of the Athenian war dead the following spring to rebuke Pericles for what she saw was his misguided policies. This funeral took place in the Kerameikos, or ‘Potter’s Quarter’, just outside the walls of Athens. Another of Cimon’s relatives, the future historian Thucydides, perhaps just too young to have fought the Samians, later described the

Kerameikos as the city's most beautiful quarter, famous for its beauty and tranquility.⁵² Sometime in the early fifth century it had become home to the *demosion sema*, the public cemetery for the war dead, and so in many ways the Athenian Arlington National Cemetery. At the funeral the remains of the dead were gathered, each tribe assigned its own tent, so that families could pay their respects and say goodbye. The remains would then be interred and afterwards came a speech by a prominent citizen. In the years that followed, many monuments listing the names of the honored dead would be found here.⁵³

On this occasion, probably in spring 438, it was Pericles who spoke. Afterwards a number of women, surely the mothers and wives of the dead, gathered around him pressing flowers and crowns into his hands, thanking him for his stirring words. Nearby stood Elpinice, waiting for the moment to corner the great leader, unafraid of speaking her mind. Elpinice rebuked Pericles sharply: for his bankrupt policies and leadership, his 'victory' over a Greek city, something her brother, whose victories were over the 'real' enemy, Persians and Phoenicians, would never have done. Pericles' response was hardly gentle or considerate: smiling only, he quoted her a line of Archilochus, 'Why lavish perfumes on a gray head' (Plut. *Per.* 28.7).

The suppression of Samos made the Athenians supreme in the eastern Aegean world, but they were no less active elsewhere. In Italy an appeal for aid from the surviving population of Sybaris, destroyed by its jealous neighbors (c. 510), was accepted. An Athenian organized pan-hellenic settlement at Thurii (c. 443) followed and attracted a number of international settlers: Hippodamus of Miletus, who helped organize it; Herodotus, the Halicarnassian born writer and intellectual; and Lysias, a young Athenian born metic, the son of a prosperous Syracusan merchant living in Athens.⁵⁴ But opportunity, economic as well as political, were also motivating factors as the rich lands of southern Italy offered prosperity, sources of food, and allies.

In the northern Aegean, a little later, perhaps c. 437, the settlement at Ennea Hodoi, destroyed by the Thracians some thirty years before, was re-colonized and renamed Amphipolis. This gave Athens access to the rich timber reserves of the region so critical to ship building as well as other natural resources such as gold and silver. Here, however, the Athenians made a costly mistake in alienating a friend. Until now Perdiccas II of Macedon had been friendly, seeing in Athens an ally against his many local rivals. Now imagining himself betrayed, Perdiccas would act against the

Athenians wherever and however he could. Elsewhere in eastern Thrace and in the Black Sea, the Athenian naval squadrons could be found showing the flag in various expeditions in the 430s.⁵⁵

Athens and Corinth

The Samian War and its unrestrained display of Athenian power surely worried the Spartans, dependent as they were on their allies to help check the helot menace. Sometime during the war, the Spartans convened a meeting of the Peloponnesian League, perhaps to hear a plea for aid from the Samians, perhaps to provide the Spartans with a pretext to become involved in the conflict. The meeting's rationale is not known, only that there was a meeting. In the debate, however, the Corinthians spoke against any role in the conflict, arguing that to do so would be to meddle in Athenian affairs.⁵⁶ This argument prevailed and it seems clear why: just as the Athenians could do as they wished in their sphere of influence, so too could the other Greeks. For the Spartans this offered some guarantees to their own hegemony over the Peloponnesus and the allies who helped them keep the helots in line. To the Corinthians, who had their own plans of expanded influence, leaving the Samians to the Athenians would offer them the same control over those they planned to rule.

Despite the appeal of the Corinthian argument, the Spartans surely remained wary. Though the helot revolt of 464–456 had indeed been suppressed, the margin of victory was thin and secured only with vital allied support. If Athens could turn on a one-time friend and ally, overturn its political system, and inflict true horrors of war, what might befall her enemies? Such concerns and anxieties were hardly imaginary – Sparta must remain vigilant and protective of her allies.

Quiet vigilance, however, did not appeal to the citizens of 'wealthy' Corinth, as the city had been known since Homeric times (*Hom. Il.* 2. 570). Ever ambitious, Corinth looked in the years after the Thirty Years' Peace to expand her horizons and was in little mood to yield to the greater power of Athens. For the moment the Corinthians seemed willing to put aside their bitter feelings for the Athenians, but this was perhaps a one-concession not to be repeated. Deep down the Corinthians held an old grudge against the Athenians, one that threatened their temporary accommodation.

This abiding dislike of Athens stemmed from the hard fighting of the 'First' Peloponnesian War. Sometime about 458 the Athenians and Corinthians had clashed inconclusively in the vicinity of Megara. Though both claimed victory in the usual fashion, only the Athenians erected a battlefield trophy that marked the other side's retreat. When the Corinthians returned home they were greeted with derision by their own friends and families, ridiculing them for losing to the Athenians. Determined to retrieve their lost honor, the Corinthians returned to the put up their own trophy and while doing so were attacked by the Athenians. This time they were decisively beaten. Fleeing in disorder, a large group of them wandered into a field with no exits and here the Athenians trapped and slaughtered them. Ever after, the Corinthians, as Thucydides says, nursed 'a bitter hatred for the Athenians'.⁵⁷ Only a match to this powder keg was missing, and a dispute between the two over Corcyra and Potidaea, two old Corinthian colonies, provided just that.

Notes

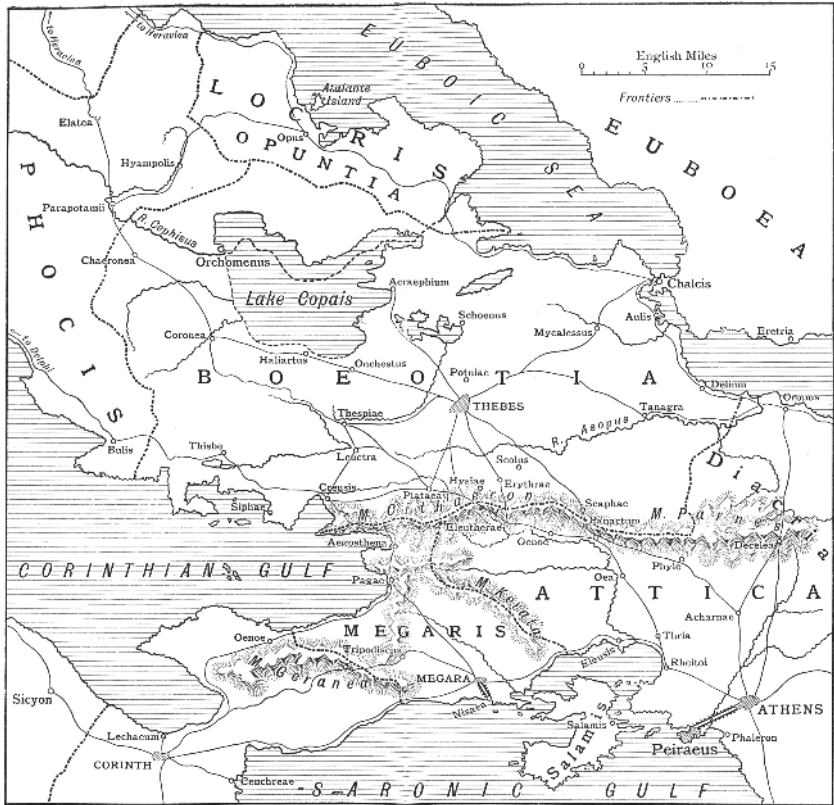
- 1 Thuc. 1.130–131, with Hornblower 1: 216–19. The chronology of the Thucydidean *Pentekontaetia* ('Fifty Years'), the era from the Persian War to the Peloponnesian, is as uncertain as it is hotly debated. See further Badian 1993 and Hornblower 1: 133–93.
- 2 On the helots, their identity and place in Spartan society see Michell 1952: 36–45, Hodkinson and Powell 1999, and Appendix C. Scheidel 2003: 240–7 discusses helot numbers.
- 3 Thuc. 1.132.4–5, an accusation seemingly invoked against any Spartan who challenged the social norm. Spartan authorities brought down Cleomenes I, king c. 525–490, on similar charges (Hdt. 6.74, with Huxley 1970: 87).
- 4 Later rehabilitated and honored (Thuc. 1.134.4), the intrigues that snared Pausanias reflect the tensions of post-war Sparta and Greece.
- 5 See Plutarch, *Life of Aristides* for details.
- 6 These treasurers were probably drawn from the elite and prestigious ranks of Athenian society. Another financial committee, the Treasurers of Athena, was drawn from the most elite Athenians, the *pentakosiomedimnoi* ('500 bushel men'). Such qualifications may also have applied to the *hellenotamiai*, making them important officials and citizens.
- 7 The Athenian tribute lists (= *ATL*) were studied extensively by Meritt, Wade-Gery, and McGregor. In the following years additional decrees regulating coinage, weights and measures (= Fornara 97), methods for the payment of

- tribute (= Fornara 98), and other administrative requirements (= Fornara 99, 102, 103) were enacted. A problem here is that the dates for most of these are disputed, largely the result of the fragmentary state of the inscriptions and the letter forms used, particularly the 'three bar sigma'. For discussion see Mattingly 1996: vii–xi (a foreword by M. Chambers).
- 8 See Sealey 1976: 243–53.
 - 9 Credit for inventing ostracism has traditionally gone to Clisthenes, founder of the Athenian democracy but it may be later (see D.M. MacDowell, 'ostracism', *OCD*³ 1083 and Sinclair 1988: 169–70). Each year the Athenians voted in the assembly whether or not to ostracize a fellow citizen, literally exiling him from the community for ten years, though this could be rescinded. Only political participation was lost: property and family remained undisturbed.
 - 10 Broneer 1938: 228–43.
 - 11 Plut. *Them.* 22.2–3 (ostracism, with Frost 1980: 187–92), *Them.* 23 (Pausanias, with Frost 194–5), *Them.* 25.3 (confiscated money, with Frost 208–9), *Them.* 26–32 (flight, exile, descendants, with Frost 209–36).
 - 12 Podlecki 1998: 11. Through his mother Agariste, Pericles was also related to Clisthenes, 'founder' of the democracy.
 - 13 Thuc. 1.98.4, Plut. *Arist.* 25.1. Thucydides (1.99.2), surely reflecting Athenian opinion, explains Athenian domination of the allies by the latter's willingness to pay tribute rather than fight like the Athenians – in effect blaming the victim for his plight.
 - 14 Badian 1966: 38–9; cf. Meiggs 1972: 45–6. On arbitration see pp. 29–35.
 - 15 Thuc. 1.100.2–101.1, 3, adding that the Spartans agreed to help the Thasians, an agreement made impossible by an earthquake and helot rising.
 - 16 Sealey 1976: 269, 271–2, Meiggs 1972: 101–8; on Cimon in Sparta, see p. 10.
 - 17 The relationship between Pericles and Ephialtes is uncertain. See Plut. *Per.* 10.6–8, with Stadter 1989: 126–9, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25, 27.1, with Podlecki 1998: 46–54 (politics) and Sinclair 1988: 18–19 (Areopagus).
 - 18 See Goldhill 1990, 2000, and Griffin 1999a: 73–94 for discussion of the intersection of tragedy and politics; Vickers 2008 argues a more radical view that it was all about politics, but see Dover 2004: 239–49 for critique.
 - 19 Neither is theater capacity clear: the fourth-century Theater of Dionysus held some 14,000, but the fifth-century theater's capacity was smaller, perhaps less than half. Thuc. 8.72.1 notes that never more than five thousand Athenians gathered to decide issues (cf. Hornblower 3: 967). This might give some idea of the largest theater crowd too. See Whitley 2001: 338–40, essentially Wycherley 1978: 207–11.
 - 20 Scholars debate the authenticity of the Peace: cf. Sealey 1976: 278–82, Eddy 1970: 8–14, Badian 1993: 1–72; see Fornara 97–103 for the sources.
 - 21 Done as a reminder of the impiety of the Persians, the act may have been as much for propaganda value as anything. Authenticity of the oath, recorded by

- Diod. 11.29.3, Lyc. *Leoc.* 81, has been questioned; see Pollitt 1972: 65–6 and Hurwit 1999: 157 for discussion. Krentz 2007: 731–44 argues for an ‘Oath of Marathon’, not Plataea.
- 22 So Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 F121 and Diod. 12.39.1. Stadter 1989: 167 notes that such an office was held only for one year. Like a Medici prince, however, Periclean influence could easily be extended through cronies and allies.
- 23 Plut. *Per.* 13.6 credits Phidias as ‘master builder’, but opinion is split: Stadter 1989: 166–7 is skeptical, Podlecki 1998: 101 accepting.
- 24 Plut. *Per.* 12–13; Meiggs 1972: 152–3. For full discussion on the Periclean building era see Hurwit 1999: 154–221.
- 25 Plut. *Per.* 9.3 (with Stadter 1989: 114–18), 14 (Thucydides’ ostracism), Sealey 1976: 298. Ehrenberg 1954: 84, n.1 remarks that Thucydides returned from his ostracism (c. 433).
- 26 Plut. *Cim.* 14–16, with Badian 1993.
- 27 Thuc. 2.27.2, 3.54.5, Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3 (allied aid for Sparta). On the end of the revolt see Hornblower 1: 156–8.
- 28 See Thuc. 1.8 (‘modernism’ in ancient Greece), 2.43.1. See Raaflaub 1994: 130 (lovers of the *polis*) and Shear 2007: 113–15 (*agora* as citizens’ domain increasingly after 430).
- 29 For detailed discussion of the Athenian democracy see Sinclair 1988; note that among its procedures for magistrates, including generals, was an examination of their conduct in office or *euthynai*, which included finances (Sinclair 1988: 78–9). The fundamental text to the democracy is [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.*, with Rhodes 1981.
- 30 See Raaflaub 1994: 113–18, 130–1, also Raaflaub 1998: 15–41, for a discussion of Athens’ rise to ‘world power’ and its development of political institutions and active participation of its citizens in political and military activities. This is essentially state-building of a modern type.
- 31 Mearsheimer 2001: 367–8, 406; cf. Doyle 1997: 76–80.
- 32 C. 490 the Corinthians made available to the Athenians, in an ancient version of lend-lease, warships for use in a bitter fight with their nearby rival Aegina. See Hdt. 6.89, with Lewis 1997: 12.
- 33 Lewis 1997: 9–21 argues that this war was primarily a conflict between Athens and Corinth, with only minimal participation by the Spartans again fighting their own war with the helots.
- 34 Thuc. 1.113.3–4, Plut. *Per.* 18.2–3, with Stadter 1989: 212.
- 35 Plataea had been a bone of contention between the Athenians and the Thebans (in particular) since c. 525 when the Plataeans appealed to Athens for aid, which was granted. The Thebans did not forget or forgive this intrusion into their sphere of influence. The Thebans had also sided with the Persians in 480 and this remained a sore point with many Greeks. For details see Sealey 1976: 144–5.

- 36 See *Ar. Nub.* 859 and sch., *Plut. Per.* 22.1-3, and other sources in Fornara 1983: 115.
- 37 See de Ste. Croix 1972: 152. Later Cleandridas' son Gylippus faced similar charges, suggesting not only that the family was notoriously corrupt, but that Spartans already appreciated the value of money.
- 38 De Ste. Croix 1972: 293-4 lists the terms of the Peace, though his list is not exhaustive.
- 39 As *Thuc.* 1.118.2 notes.
- 40 *Plut. Per.* 24.8-9, with Stadter 1989: 238-9 (Pericles and Aspasia), 25.1 (Aspasia persuading Pericles to support Miletus), Fornara 111 (decree on comedy).
- 41 Regime change has been debated: *Thuc.* 1.115.3, 117.3, with Hornblower 1: 192-3; see also Quinn 1981: 17 (against) and Meiggs 1972: 189 (for).
- 42 Briant 2002: 581 suggests that Pissuthnes acted on the instructions of the Great King. But the distances between the King's court and the Aegean argues against this. More likely Pissuthnes acted on his own initiative, surely aware of what would please the King.
- 43 *Plut. Per.* 26.4, with Stadter 1989: 249-50, noting Plutarch's error in reversing the tattoos (as *Plut. Nic.* 29 shows: Athenian prisoners tattooed with the Syracusan horse, the device of their coinage); see also Rawlings 2007: 160.
- 44 Fornara 115 (treaty), 113 (war costs, something like 1400 talents); *Plut. Per.* 25-28.3 (punishments of the Samians). Plutarch rejects the story of Pericles' cruelty, but see Meiggs 1972: 191-2, Stadter 1989: 257-60; Quinn 1981: 69, n.26 downplays the event.
- 45 *Plut. Per.* 25.5 (Samian warships); Greek (and Athenian) warships carried upwards of ten marines per ship, so the number suggested here is conservative. See Jordan 1972: 184-5 for discussion.
- 46 Cf. Develin 1989: 89 (Sophocles general in 441/0), Lewis 1988: 41-3 (generalship in 437/6, perhaps also 441/0), and Ehrenberg 1954: 4.
- 47 In 443/2, so Lewis 1988: 36-8, cf. Develin 1989: 87-8. Holding such an office would place Sophocles among the elites of Athens.
- 48 The date for the *Antigone* is traditionally 442, but the rationale for this date is not compelling despite its frequent restatement. Lefkowitz 1981: 82 notes that no clear information fixes the play to this year, and Lewis 1988: 35-45 shows why the date of 438 is preferred. Griffith 1999: 1-2 offers no reason to support any date, simply repeating the traditional one.
- 49 *Soph. Ant.* 8. *Thuc.* 2.4, 9 notes Pericles' grip on the office of *strategos* and how he virtually ruled Athens through it. Some translations render Sophocles' choice of language, i.e., *strategos*, as 'King' (e.g., Watling in the Penguin edition, p. 126; Grene in the Chicago edition translates as 'commander' [p. 161]) but this obscures what the Athenian audience would have heard and imagined.
- 50 *Soph. Ant.* 21-32, and so too Lewis 1988: 45, Griffith 1999: 48.

- 51 Soph. *Ant.* 734, with Griffith 1999: 48.
- 52 Thuc. 2.34.5. The Kerameikos lay just outside the archaic city of Athens and had been divided when Themistocles rebuilt the walls after the Persian Wars. Here the great festival celebrating Athena, the Panathenaic, began its route to the acropolis and her temple, and here Harmodius and Aristogeiton assassinated Hipparchus, brother of the tyrant Hippias in 514 (Thuc. 6.57.1).
- 53 Since the Clisthenic reforms of the late sixth century, the Athenians had been divided into ten tribes, and this formed the basis of military and political structures. See Sealey 1976: 147–60 (Clisthenes), Tritle 2000: 155, 166–70 (Kerameikos).
- 54 Diod. 12.10.3–10–11.4, Plut. *Per.* 11.5, with Stadter 1989: 142, Dion. Hal. *Lys.* 1, and Sealey 1976: 309.
- 55 Thuc. 1.100.3, 4.102 (Amphipolis), 1.56.2–57 (Perdiccas), also Sealey 1976: 248–9, 312–13.
- 56 Thuc. 1.40.5–6. Thucydides does not explain the Corinthian argument, but its thrust seems clear enough; see p. 26.
- 57 Thuc. 1.103.4, 1.106 (slaughter of Corinthian soldiers).



Boeotia-Attica (after B.W. Henderson, *The Great War Between Athens and Sparta*, London, 1927)