The Athenian Empire (478-404 BC)

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1. Introduction

The argument

In this paper, I argue four points:

> i) The fifth-century Athenian Empire (Figure 1; also known as the First Athenian Empire, or the Delian League) is most significant as an episode of state formation.
> ii) This political unit (which, for the sake of convenience, I will continue to call the Athenian Empire) took significant steps toward breaking the bounds of the polis (city-state) system and transforming the Aegean into a territorial state with Athens as its capital.
> iii) War and preparation for war were the most important forces behind this process of state formation.
> iv) The outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 greatly accelerated the process of state formation in the Aegean; but Athens' defeat in 404 permanently interrupted it.

These arguments break with the dominant tradition of empiricist, narrative historiography on the Athenian Empire. We know a great deal about the details of Athenian rule, but there has been little work on the structures of Greek statehood. I suggest that once we focus on the Athenian Empire as an episode of state formation, we have to set it against the background of similar processes in other parts of the fifth-century Greek world. We need to explain two things: why state formation accelerated in the fifth century, and why no state concentrated such levels of capital and coercive power that it could overwhelm the city-state system to become a larger territorial state. Gary Runciman (1989: 326-36; 1990) has made the most important contribution to this question, arguing that the polis was an evolutionary dead-end, unable to respond to the changing international environment in the fifth and fourth centuries. I argue that this is not entirely true. In my concluding section, I identify four possible explanations for the failure of the Athenians' state-building program:

i) International: coercive power was relatively evenly distributed among poleis, and any serious moves toward concentration were met by balancing coalitions, which could include non-Greek powers such as Persia and Carthage.
ii) Structural: Greek city-states (particularly Athens) tried to restrict the benefits of statehood to their own citizen body, rather than admitting members of subject cities to citizenship.
iii) Ideological: Greek civic egalitarianism was incompatible with strong states, and was too powerful to overcome.
iv) Contingent: the Athenians came very close to success. With just a little more luck, they would have won the Peloponnesian War, and would have united most of the Greek world into a single state.

I argue that the first three factors were important, but none presented an insuperable barrier to state-formation. Events matter: had it not been for military blunders, Athens would have won the war and created a durable territorial state in the Aegean. This approach shows why certain standard questions about the Athenian Empire have proved unanswerable, and why we should move on from some of these arguments to ask new questions.

Archê, empire, and state

Thucydides normally calls Athenian power in the Aegean its *archê*, or "rule." He seems to have self-consciously distinguished *archê* from *hêgemonia*, "hegemony," which denoted a looser form of alliance or control (Wickersham 1994: 31-34). At 1.97 he describes the consensual alliance of 478 BC against Persia as *hêgemonia*, and Athens' unpopular control in 431 as *archê*. He says that *archê* is based on overwhelming *dynamis*, "power" (1.99), and that those over whom the Athenians wield their *archê* can be said to be enslaved (1.98). Historians normally translate *archê* as "empire."

Despite the care of their philological analysis of Thucydides' Greek, Greek historians do not like to dwell on the definition of English terms. Not once in his 620-page classic *The Athenian Empire* (1972), for example, did Russell Meiggs say what he thought an empire was. A few historians have felt that "empire" is too strong a word for what the Athenians created, and (despite Thucydides' usage) have suggested that we translate *archê* as "hegemony." But as Moses Finley pointed out, this is not so much a clarification of concepts as a tendency "to give excessive weight to purely formal

considerations, which, if adopted rigorously, would fragment the category 'empire' so much as to redner it empty and useless" (Finley 1978a: 104).

German scholars have shown more interest in definitions, and Wolfgang Schuller (1974: 2-3) borrowed Weber's distinction between *direkte* and *indirekte Herrschaft*, but did not expand this into a discussion of different kinds of imperialism. Further, as Finley (1978a: 306 n. 8) pointed out, Schuller systematically confused ideologies of power and the institutional exercise of power. Finley noted the "unavoidable ambiguity" of the words "state" and "empire." He suggested that "Common sense is right … [that] there have been throughout history structures that belong within a single class on substantive grounds, namely, the exercise of authority (or power or control) by one state over one or more other states (or communities or peoples) for an extended period of time" (1978a: 104), and proposed a series of typologies for ancient empires (Finley 1978b). Similarly, Peter Garnsey and Dick Whittaker (1978a) noted a contrast between "restricted" and "abstract" definitions of empire in the essays in their volume *Imperialism in the Ancient World*. But historians of the Athenian Empire have paid little attention to calls for conceptual rigor.

I therefore start out from definitions of the key terms offered by non-classicists. In his influential book *Empires*, Michael Doyle suggests that

> Empire … is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process of establishing or maintaining an empire.
>
> These definitions … distinguish empires from the rest of world politics by the actual foreign control of who rules and what rules a subordinate polity. (Doyle 1986: 45)

Doyle's approach emphasizes political boundaries: the imperial power is "a foreign state" that imposes political control or effective sovereignty over another state. Thus the study of empires is primarily a matter of international relations. Doyle traces this internationalist perspective back to Thucydides himself (Doyle 1986: 30).

As a typical example of a definition of the state, on the other hand, we might take Michael Mann's summary of the Weberian tradition as:

> 1 a *differentiated* set of institutions and personnel, embodying
> 2 *centrality*, in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from a centre to cover a
> 3 *territorially demarcated area*, over which it exercises
> 4 a monopoly of *authoritative binding rule-making*, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence. (Mann 1986: 112)

We might immediately note the overlaps between Doyle's and Mann's explananda: both are territorially extensive hierarchical political organizations, through which one group of people exercises control over another. Charles Tilly makes this explicit, defining the state in such a way that it includes empires and city-states as sub-types:

> Let us define states as coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories. The term therefore includes city-states, empires, theocracies, and many other forms of government, but excludes tribes, lineages, firms, and churches as such. (Tilly 1992: 1-2)

There are certainly contexts where we might wish to distinguish states and empires very sharply, but for my purposes we can think of them as the two ends of a spectrum of forms of coercion-wielding organizations. The empire end of the spectrum would be characterized by a strong sense of ethnic distance between rulers and ruled, and the state end by greater internal cohesion (Tilly himself [1992: 21] contrasts "tribute-taking" empires, periodically extorting revenues from weaker states, with more organized forms of extraction within city-states and national states). I will argue below that the Athenian *archê*, which (following Tilly's terminology) we might best (although clumsily) translate as "coercion-wielding power," fell toward the state end of this spectrum, with state-formation as its most important outcome.

While the international-relations approach explains much about the Athenian Empire, Thucydides makes it clear that it cannot explain everything. First, we should remember the famous pair of passages where he has Pericles (2.63) and Cleon (3.37) characterize Athenian power over other cities as being like that of a *tyrannos*, a sole ruler within a city-state. Thucydides may have invented this metaphor himself, or it may have been common coinage around 430 BC. Either way, some Athenians conceptualized what Athens was doing to the Aegean in terms of a model of state powers. Second, we should bear in mind that Thucydides begins not with an analysis of imperialism in the sense that

Doyle defines it, but with the "Archaeology" (1.1-19), a review of the history of increasing levels of state control over financial and military resources, and the ability of rulers to project power. As Robert Connor (1984: 20-32) and Lisa Kallet-Marx (1993: 23-36) insist, Thucydides' decision to begin this way shows that thid was how he was thinking about the Athenian *archê*—in terms quite similar to Mann's definition of statehood.

State formation

Greek historians may be surprised by my use of the expression "state formation" in a fifth-century context. For many years, thinking about the state in Greece was dominated by a German-language idealist tradition normally traced back to Jakob Burckhardt's *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* (1890). In this school of thought, the polis both expressed the Greek *Geist* and provided the framework for its development. In the twentieth century, the Greek state was normally seen as evolving out of the tribal societies left behind by the fall of Mycenae, and reaching more or less its final form in the eighth century BC (e.g., Ehrenberg 1969: 3-25). But this model has since come under severe attack for its idealism and disregard of detail (Gawantka 1985).

English-language scholarship was long dominated more by the details of politics than by abstract principles of the state, but in the 1970s some archaeologists borrowed ideas from neo-evolutionary cultural anthropology, representing "the state" not as a *Volksgeist* but as a particular level of socio-cultural complexity. Anthony Snodgrass' *Archaeology and the Rise of the Greek State* (1977) was the crucial contribution in this school of thought. From this perspective "state-formation" tends to be seen as a discrete moment of transition (again usually placed in the eighth century) from simple, pre-state structures, to more complex, state-level ones, including permanent social stratification and centralized monopolies on resources. Some of my own work falls into this category (e.g., Morris 1987).

Both perspectives led to important advances, but also had their drawbacks. In particular, both conceived state formation as a one-time transition to a fixed category, happening in the eighth century, rather than an ongoing process. Classical scholars have paid little attention to more recent social-scientific work on the continuing ferment in

discussions of "the state" (e.g., Rueschemeyer et al. 1985; Block 1988; Jessop 1990; Tilly 1992). George Steinmetz argues that

> The study of state-formation is inherently historical, because it focuses on the creation of durable states and the transformation of basic structural features of these states. Sometimes state-formation is understood as a mythic initial moment in which centralized, coercion-wielding, hegemonic organizations are created within a given territory. All activities that follow this original era are then described as "policy-making" rather than "state-formation." But states are never formed once and for all. It is more fruitful to view state-formation as an ongoing process of structural change and not as a one-time event. (Steinmetz 1999: 8-9)

The eighth century was a turning point in the history of Greek state-formation (Snodgrass 1980: 15-84). There was a sharp increase in the power of central authorities, which began building monumental temples, waging wars, and enforcing codified laws. The city-states of the eighth through sixth centuries were more powerful than the communities of the preceding "Dark Age," but despite their remarkable cultural achievements, in comparative terms they remained extraordinarily weak. They had tiny revenues and minimal coercive powers. Most states relied on harbor and market dues, renting out state properties, and (where available) income from mines. There was virtually no direct taxation: land taxes and poll taxes were considered to be tyrannical, and income taxes were unimaginable. An enormous proportion of the state's tiny income would be spent on cult (>generally, see Snodgrass 1980: 123-60). Even war was cheap, since the wealthier citizens who made up the hoplite phalanx supplied their own arms and armor, and campaigns were normally settled with a single battle in the agricultural off-season (Hanson 1989). State navies only began to be a significant factor after 550 BC (Wallinga 1993), and there was a quantum leap in the costs of war in the early fifth century. Athens and Syracuse then began to concentrate much greater powers at the center, threatening to transform the old way of life. To make sense of this we need to give up the idea of state formation as a one-time event in the eighth century, and to think of it historically.

Forms of the state in Greece

Archaic and classical city-states were very peculiar societies. There were tremendous local variations (see Gehrke 1986), but also a general tendency around the shores of the

Aegean to form small communities of essentially equal free male citizens, defined through rigid gender oppositions and the use of chattel slavery. Fifth-century Athens was considered to be a monster-state, with perhaps 350,000 residents in its 1000 square-mile territory, 40,000 of them in the city itself. Most poleis probably had fewer than 10,000 residents. Differences in wealth between citizens were minor compared to those in the Near East or the Roman Empire. In fourth-century Athens, the only time and place for which we can hazard a guess, the distribution of land scored under .4 as measured by Gini's coefficient of inequality, and the largest recorded estate enclosed just 0.1% of Attica's land. Most documented regions of the Roman Empire, by contrast, score over .6, with the largest estate regularly occupying 10% of a region's arable land (Morris 2000: 141-42).

Down to 500 BC poleis normally were ruled by oligarchies of the wealthier citizens. Some of these men saw themselves as having links to the gods, the heroes of the legendary past, and the great kings of the East, but most accepted that the farming community around them was the source of political legitimacy. If these farmers believed that the rich were behaving unjustly, and if divisions within the ruling elite reached crisis proportions, they might choose to support one member of the elite in a bid for supreme power as a tyrant. By 500, the ordinary citizens were sometimes so confident in their own powers that when a political crisis overtook the ruling elite, they might replace them not with a new set of oligarchs or a tyrant, but with a direct democracy. Democratic institutions might then lead to further leveling in the form of redistribution of state resources, through pay for filling political offices or serving in the armed forces. In democratic Athens, the rich had to justify their actions before mass juries of the poor, and found it difficult even to articulate alternative political and social arrangements (Ober 1989; 1998).

In earlier studies (Morris 1987; 1998a; 2000) I tried to trace these developments by combining the archaeological and textual records, arguing that the structures of the poleis pose a serious challenge to conventional evolutionary thinking about complex society (Morris 1991; 1997). I tried to make this point by comparing an ideal type of polis organization with Ernest Gellner's widely cited model of the "agro-literate state"

(Figure 2). Gellner based this on Emile Durkheim's century-old theory of mechanical solidarity, suggesting that

> In the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a small minority of the population, rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants. Generally speaking, its ideology exaggerates rather than underplays the inequality of classes and the degree of separation of the ruling stratum … Below the world of the horizontally stratified minority at the top, there is another world, that of the laterally separated petty communities of the lay members of society … The state is interested in extracting taxes, maintaining the peace, and not much else, and has no interest in promoting lateral communication between its subject communities. (Gellner 1983: 9-10)

Figure 2 is not a good representation of a classical or even an archaic polis. Such poleis knew no rigidly separated ruling class lording it over a downtrodden peasantry. Insofar as it had military, priestly, and administrative elites, they were only very loosely defined. Figure 2 has no room for the free citizenry which formed the core of the polis. Greek villages were much less laterally insulated than in Gellner's vision, and ordinary citizens moved freely between town and country. Freedom and equality meant fundamentally different things in a democratic polis than in an agrarian state. Gellner himself observed that "the Agrarian Age was basically a period of stagnation, oppression, and superstition. Exceptions do occur, but we are all inclined, as in the case of Classical Greece, to call them 'miracles'" (1988: 22). An explanation framed in terms of miracles is not very helpful, but it does bring out the peculiarity of Greek society.

I have argued that because of these peculiarities, Greece poses a serious challenge to standard social-evolutionary theory. But there is also a fundamental contradiction in fifth-century Greek social history, which I want to explore in this paper. Seen from inside, Athens differed radically from the social structure represented in Figure 2. Further, Athens actively promoted democratic structures in other poleis in the fifth century. But when we take a broader perspective, we see that the Athenian *archê*—which paid for much of Athens' democratic expansion—was gradually converting the Aegean *as a whole* into something very like Figure 2. The Athenians were converting themselves into the stratified, horizontally segregated layers of a military and administrative ruling class, standing above the laterally insulated communities of subjected poleis. Athens imposed a single foreign policy and carried it out with a single, Aegean-wide military.

The armed forces were paid for by fixed, annual contributions from each city. Athenian administrators collected these payments carefully, and intervened on a regular basis in local politics. They judged many of the most important lawsuits within the Aegean, requiring the defendants to come to Athens for trial. Athens became the Aegean's economic central place, and imposed its own weights, measures, and coinage on the other cities. Contrary to traditional practice in the Greek world, Athenians took over land in the territories of other cities. Not content with all this, Athens pressed old claims to be the ancestral homeland of all Ionian Greeks, and integrated the subject cities into Athenian rituals. These cities were being relegated to the status of Gellner's laterally separated communities of primary producers, as Athens started turning itself the capital of a territorial state and home to a ruling elite of Athenian citizens interested in extracting taxes, maintaining the peace, and defending itself.

By 421, the Aegean looked quite like Figure 2. But as it turned out, the structures that the Athenians had created were not robust enough to withstand the military disasters of 413-404. There were a few examples of remarkable loyalty (*IG* i^3 101, 127), but on the whole, Sparta's pose as the champion of Greek liberty was attractive, and the cities leaped at the chance of reasserting local autonomy. Some Spartans tried simply to take over the Athenian *archê* after 404, but the war (and particularly Persian intervention) had shattered the delicate balance that had favored state-building.

The presentation of the argument

In section 2, I briefly describe the surviving evidence, then in section 3 summarize the main trends in scholarship. In section 4, the core of the essay, I review the processes of state formation, under the headings of political/military, economic, administrative, and cultural institutions. In part 5, I draw out some conclusions.

Since my argument is mainly about changing the framework within which we interpret the data, rather than offering new data or reinterpreting the meaning of specific pieces of evidence, it does not lend itself immediately to empirical verification or refutation. It does not depend on the opinions of ancient writers (even though, as noted above, there are signs that Thucydides would have agreed about the basic direction the

Aegean was taking in the fifth century, and I return to his judgments in section 5). However, the argument can be said to be mistaken insofar as it can be shown that:

1. Athens did not in fact succeed in centralizing capital and the means of coercion
2. Athenian actions were largely rhetorical, and in fact had no real impact on the cities
3. State-formation proceeded in the Aegean much the same way after 404 as before, despite the collapse of Athenian power

To the extent that one or more of these propositions holds, then we could legitimately say that Athens was not moving the Aegean toward a structure like that in Figure 2, and that looking at the Athenian Empire as example of state formation would be a mistake. However, I doubt that any historian would seriously defend such arguments. That raises a different issue: if everyone agrees on these matters, then my entire argument might be merely a terminological quibble, signifying nothing more important than whether "empire" or "state" is a better translation for *archê* in Thucydides. But I do not think that is the case. Rather, I suggest that once we see these events as a process of state formation, rather than of the imperial extension of one state's power over others, we have to recognize that Athens was transforming Greek society, bursting the bounds of the three-hundred-year-old polis framework. Runciman's argument that the polis was an evolutionary dead end then appears as a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* rationalization: Athens was evolving into a more efficient and powerful state form in the fifth century, and was only prevented from doing so by the Spartan victory in the Peloponnesian War. With a little more luck, Athens could have burst the confines of the city-state system and established itself as the capital of a durable territorial state. And then the history of the world might have turned out very differently.

2. The evidence

We can divide our sources into two main types: literary works and inscriptions. Most of the standard works on the Athenian Empire begin with a review of the sources (Meiggs [1972: 1-22] is particularly good).

Herodotus of Halicarnassus (probably 484-c. 420 BC), the "father of history," was an eyewitness to the growth of the Athenian Empire, but wrote surprisingly little about it.

Some classicists suggest that his *History* was meant as a cautionary tale, suggesting that Athens could, like Persia, become a victim of its own hubris, but he never explicitly says this. Herodotus is very helpful for the events of 478/7, but says little thereafter.

Our major source is Thucydides of Athens, who wrote a long account of the first twenty years of the Peloponnesian War, prefaced by a brief review of the period 478-431. For virtually any question arising out of the text of Thucydides, the great *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Gomme et al. 1945-81) and Simon Hornblower's newer commentary (1991-) are indispensable. Thucydides was probably born around 460 BC. He tells us that he started writing his *History* in 431, because he saw that this was the greatest war that had ever taken place, and was clearly still at it in 404. The *History* breaks off in mid-sentence during his coverage of the events of 411. He probably died around 400 BC.

His account of his methods (1.20-22) sets him apart from other classical historians, and his text commands a unique level of respect among modern scholars. It remains the core of any analysis, including mine. Interpreting Thucydides is nonetheless highly problematic. Hellenists have debated the issues for two centuries, with few signs of agreement. Many of the most intractable methodological problems, such as how Thucydides composed his text, or how we should read the speeches he put in the mouths of the principal actors, have only a marginal impact on my arguments. But other questions, such as his silence about the enormous increase in tribute demands in 425, or his basic ideological perspective on Athenian growth, are more relevant.

Fragments survive from other contemporaries, such as Ion of Chios, Hellanicus of Lesbos, and Ktesias, but they are more often frustrating than enlightening. Important comments crop up in fifth-century tragedy and in Aristophanes' comedies, and fourth-century orators and philosophers (notably [Aristotle]'s *Constitution of Athens*) often mention episodes from the Empire's history. But for detailed narratives to set alongside Thucydides, we must rely on much later sources. Diodorus of Sicily (c. 80-20 BC) offers a continuous narrative. His method was generally to find a narrative account, such as Thucydides or the lost fourth-century writer Ephorus, and then to follow it as far as possible. He sometimes includes information missing from Thucydides (e.g., his story [11.50] of a debate at Sparta that he dates to 475 over whether to try to regain control of

the Athenian Empire); but in transferring information to his annalistic framework he frequently made mistakes and rationalized his stories. When Diodorus clashes with Thucydides, few scholars side with him.

Later still, around AD 100, Plutarch wrote a series of *Parallel Lives* of Greek and Roman statesmen. These include Aristides, Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lysander. Plutarch makes it clear that moral improvement was his main concern, not factual accuracy or historical analysis, and his interpretations of Athenian culture often seem deeply colored by the Roman Empire in his own age. But Plutarch also had access to sources that no longer survive, and he clearly read widely and carefully. He is often a major source.

Finally, the inscriptions recovered by more than a century of excavation have transformed our narrative (many of the key texts are collected in Meiggs and Lewis 1969, and translated in Fornara 1983 and Hornblower and Greenstock 1984). Changes in Athenian democracy generated a boom in record-keeping after 462, and with the transfer of the treasury from Delos to Athens in 454, records of the *aparchê* (the one-sixtieth of the tribute given to Athena) allow us to reconstruct the overall tribute payments. Unfortunately, few inscriptions contain precise dating information until the very end of the fifth century, and we rely largely on letter forms to date the stones (Meiggs 1966). This calls for an important digression. Most epigraphers have agreed for decades that any inscription using the three-barred sigma (•) must date before about 445 BC, at which point carvers started using the four-barred version of that letter (Σ). Consequently, historians dated a number of texts describing major Athenian interventions in the internal government of the subject cities or Athenian efforts to impose uniform policies on the entire Empire to the 450s and early 440s. But in a series of essays beginning in 1961, Harold Mattingly argued on historical grounds that the palaeographic dogma must be wrong, and that most or all of these measures were taken in the 420s, or even later. He argued that some carvers carried on using older letter forms, and that when we have no date for a decree, we should put more weight on the general historical context than on formal palaeographical conventions (H. Mattingly 1996).

For thirty years, nearly all professional historians rejected Mattingly's thesis. But in 1989, a combination of computer-enhanced photography and laser imagery overturned

the consensus. An inscription recording a treaty between Athens and the Sicilian city of Segesta (*IG* i^3 11) is highly unusual in having both "old-fashioned" letters—the three-barred sigma and the rounded-and-tailed rho—and the name of an archon. Unfortunately, the stone was used for many years as the threshold to a house, and the movement of the door over the inscription's surface erased all of the archon's name except the final letters –ON. Mattingly, swayed by the fact that including the archon's name is normally a late fifth-century phenomenon, restored the name as Antiphon, archon in 418/17; most historians preferred Habron, archon in 458/7. In their thorough analysis of the stone, Mortimer Chambers et al. (1990) have now shown that Mattingly is almost certainly right. There are still dissenters (e.g., Henry 1992; contra, Chambers 1993), but the case for 418/17 is very strong.

Like most technical advances, this creates as many problems as it solves. One inscription with three-barred sigmas dates well after 446, so clearly there is no reason why more might not do so. Mattingly argued that given the well attested financial crisis facing Athens early in the Peloponnesian War (see Kagan 1974: 24-42; cf. Kallet-Marx 1993: 27-38), most of the inscriptions with three-barred sigmas in which Athens takes a tough line with the cities belong in the 420s. But he also recognized that this was a highly subjective argument (H. Mattingly 1996: 10-11), and Finley (1978a) mocked it as falling into the "harshness of Cleon trap." We might raise two general problems. First, there were other occasions earlier in the fifth century when Athens' extensive commitments might also have created severe financial problems. In the 450s, for instance, Athens was fighting simultaneously in Egypt, Cyprus, the north Aegean, and the Peloponnese, and Meiggs (1972: 129-74) argued that there was just such a crisis in the early 440s. We have no Thucydides or Aristophanes for the First Peloponnesian War, so we might be overlooking an even more plausible context for Athens' financial and administrative interventions. However, the evidence we do have—the story that when the treasury was moved to Athens in 454 it contained either 8,000 (Diodorus 12.38) or 10,000 (Diodorus 12.54; 13.21) talents, the relatively small sums of tribute recorded for 454/3 and subsequent years (*IG* i^3 259), the lavish building campaign begun at Athens in the early 440s, and Thucydides' comment (3.19) that 428 BC was the first time the Athenians had ever felt the need to impose a direct tax on themselves—suggests that Mattingly was right

to pinpoint the 420s as the first period of severe financial constraints. Second, we need not assume that Athens' tougher line was simply a response to financial problems: it could have been driven more by ideological than by monetary concerns. If this was so, then the early 440s could be as plausible a date for many inscriptions as the 420s, particularly if we believe that Kallias negotiated a peace treaty between Athens and Persia around 449, and that this called the whole *raison d'être* of the Empire into question (e.g., Meiggs 1972: 129-74). In the case of the regulations for Eretria and Chalcis (*IG* i^3 39, 40), the traditional 446/5, after the well attested revolt of 447/6 (Thucydides 1.114), strikes me as far more plausible than Mattingly's 424/3. But overall, in the rest of this essay I follow Mattingly's dates.

3. Approaches to the Athenian Empire

Unlike the Roman Empire (e.g., D. Mattingly 1997; Woolf 1998), Athens has attracted little culturalist analysis (see Morris and Scheidel, this vol.). Stimulated perhaps in part by Robert Connor's pioneering re-reading of Thucydides (Connor 1984), there is something of a "Princeton School" of literary treatments of the representation of empire and its Others (e.g., Rosenbloom 1995; Dougherty 1996; Kurke 1997). But the boundary between "literary" and "historical" studies has otherwise remained sharp. On the whole, historians interested in the relationships between empire and culture have put economics and politics first, seeing literature and art as epiphenomena (e.g., Meier 1993; Boedeker and Raaflaub 1998). There have been efforts to write "epichoric" history, looking at the Empire from the perspective of its member states (e.g., Figueira 1991; 1993), but these have little in common with the cultural analyses of modern imperialism (e.g., Pratt 1992; Said 1993).

There was some interest in social-scientific analysis in the late 1970s, but it never developed very far. Finley (1978a, b; 1985a: 67-87), steeped in the Weberian tradition, called for more rigorous categories of analysis, and argued that the central question should be "what material benefits did Athens obtain (whether deliberately envisaged or not) from the endeavour [of imperial control]?" (Finley 1978a: 108). Sally Humphreys (1978: 250-65) offered a structural-differentiation model that touched on the impact of empire, and Peter Garnsey (1988: 120-33) examined the interaction of imperial

institutions and food supply. John K. Davies' *Democracy and Classical Greece* (1978: 21-146) was the most serious attempt to combine narrative history with geo-political analysis, and in the new edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* Davies (1992) provided a more general review of socio-economic developments in fifth-century Athens. But the main group of younger Greek historians operating within a social-scientific framework in the 1980s, at Finley's own institution of Cambridge University, moved in a different direction. Historians such as Robin Osborne (1987), Tom Gallant (1991), and Robert Sallares (1991) made major contributions to our understanding of classical Athenian society and economics. But the Athenian Empire and imperialism do not even appear in the indices of their books. Drawing inspiration more from early *Annales* studies, economic anthropology, and prehistoric archaeology than from historical sociology or political science, they produced what Oxford historians in the nineteenth century liked to call "history with the politics left out."

As a result, the Athenian Empire has been left to scholars favoring empiricist, narrative approaches. There is now an enormous literature, of very high technical quality. Virtually every point I touch on in this essay has its own steadily growing bibliography of learned articles and monographs. I cannot possibly cite this literature in full, so I limit myself to the work that has had most influence on my thinking.

Thucydides' brief account of the Pentekontaetia (1.89-117) provides the framework for all studies. The basic story was firmly established in the nineteenth century. Russell Meiggs observed that "When I studied Greek history as an undergraduate at Oxford nearly fifty years ago [i.e., in the 1920s] it was reasonable to think that nothing significantly new could be written about the Athenian Empire" (Meiggs 1972: vii). That changed with the painstaking reconstruction of the fragments from the inscribed records of the Athenian tribute lists (Meritt et al. 1939-53). These new data stimulated fierce debates about the character of Athenian imperial exploitation (e.g., Ste. Croix 1954/55; Bradeen 1960), and eventually a group of major narrative accounts (Kagan 1969; Meiggs 1972; Ste. Croix 1972; Schuller 1974; overview in Rhodes 1985). Three major themes have dominated these discussions: (1) the story of Athenian exploitation of the allies and the slide from a Delian League to an Empire; (2) moral

evaluation of the Empire; and (3) assigning blame for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

There have been few major syntheses in this tradition since the 1970s; Meiggs' description of the attitude of the 1920s perhaps applies equally well to the 1980s. The fixing of the Segesta decree in 418/17 will probably stimulate a new group of narratives, although at present ancient historians seem to be waiting to see whether professional opinion does indeed line up behind Mattingly's chronology.

4. Athenian state formation in the fifth century BC

In this section, I try to show that during the fifth century Athens was moving the Aegean toward a structure much like that represented in Figure 2. I divide the surviving data from the Athenian Empire into four broad categories of political/military, economic, administrative, and cultural changes. All the evidence I discuss in this section is already well known to scholars, but, I suggest, its significance has been obscured by the emphasis on implicit models of imperialism.

1. *Political/military institutions*

Athens took three major steps: (a) the creation of an Aegean-wide foreign policy; (b) the creation of an Aegean-wide military force, monopolizing legitimate violence; and (c) the imposition of a general peace within its territory.

(a) *Foreign policy*. Even a casual reading of Herodotus reveals how common wars were in the Aegean during the sixth century. The Persian threat encouraged many poleis to set aside their petty rivalries in 481, and after Sparta's withdrawal in 478/7 those Greeks who gathered at Delos were eager to continue this unity against Persia. Thucydides (1.96) says that the *proschema* ("pretext," or "announced intention") of the alliance was to plunder Persian territory in compensation for their losses in the war of 480-478. Later, though, he has various critics of Athens say that the goal was to defend Ionia against Persia (3.10) or to defend the freedom of the Greeks (6.76). Scholars hotly debate what the "original policy" was, but since the main activities in the 470s and 460s were clearly directed against Persia (Thucydides 1.98-100), the details are not important here. Andocides

(3.37-38), writing ninety years later, claims that Athens was only interested in gaining power over the other cities, but Thucydides—hardly an Athenian apologist—presents the story less cynically.

Thucydides (1.96) and Diodorus (11.47) say that policy was decided in a general assembly (*synodos*) set up on Delos. We do not know whether it was unicameral with all cities having one vote, or bicameral, with a chamber of allies balancing decisions made in the Assembly at Athens. Thucydides' comments at 3.10 make most sense if there was a unicameral assembly. By 415 the Athenians were acting without consulting the other cities, even when they provided troops (e.g., Thucydides 6.8-26; 7.57), and Thucydides' silence about the assembly of cities in his detailed account of the events of leading to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War strongly suggests that Athens had taken complete control by 432. Meiggs (1972: 173 n. 1) argued that the transition came during the 440s.

All the cities swore to have the same friends and enemies for all time ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 23.5; Plutarch, *Aristides* 25), and Athens did not tolerate departures from the Aegean-wide policy. Diodorus (11.70) says that by 464 some cities found Athenian control oppressive, and took to plotting among themselves, scorning the general assembly. When Naxos tried to leave the association, probably some time around 470, Athens used the fleet to prevent this; and, Thucydides (1.99) adds, "later the same thing also happened to each of the other cities as circumstances arose." Athens fought major wars to keep Thasos (465-463), Euboea (447/6), Samos (440/39), and Lesbos (428/7) under control. On the whole, the other cities in the Empire supported Athens in these endeavors.

(b) *Armed forces*. This unitary foreign policy depended on the existence of united armed forces under central control. In 477 the cities appointed Aristides "the Just," a prominent Athenian statesman, to work out what each polis would contribute to such a force. Some provided ships and crews (above all Athens, which had 200 triremes, but also Samos, Chios, and Lesbos), while others made cash contributions. Aristides' assessments won unanimous approval (Thucydides 5.18; Diodorus 11.46; Plutarch, *Aristides* 24), and he appointed Athenian treasurers (*hellenotamiai*) to oversee the finances (Thucydides 1.96).

Most of the contributions recorded in the tribute lists from 454 onward are much smaller than the 2-3 talents that it cost to keep a trireme at sea for a summer campaign. United armed forces provided economies of scale: even the tiniest poleis could contribute, and by pooling their resources, the cities could muster greater forces than the individual cities could ever assemble. In effect, the cities were buying their security from Persian attack very cheaply. Ruschenbusch (1983; 1984; 1985) has also argued that the size of tribute is a good guide to the size of each city's population, and that most members of the alliance did not in fact have enough men to man a ship, though this argument rapidly becomes circular (Nixon and Price 1990).

The 200 Athenian triremes dominated the fleet, and an Athenian, Cimon, quickly established himself as the alliance's main military leader. There is no evidence for any significant debates within the fleet over whether it should follow Athenian directions. This stands in sharp contrast to the arguments over strategy among the Greeks in 480 (Herodotus 8.40-64), although it may just be the result of the interests of our sources. The only serious challenge to unity came from the unwillingness of some cities to submit to the rigors of discipline and training in pursuit of the common goal. This problem had led to the break-up of the united Ionian fleet facing Persia in the 490s (Herodotus 6.12). Thucydides (1.99) and Plutarch (*Cimon* 11) say that some cities were reluctant to face the strain of war, and agreed to pay cash contributions instead of providing the ships and crews they had originally been assessed for.

There are two sides to this story. On the one hand, Athens was apparently happy for Lesbos, Chios, and Samos to provide ships, calling them the guardians of Athenian power ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 24.2; cf. Scholiast on Aristophanes, *Birds* 880, citing Theopompus and Eupolis). Athens only disbanded the Samian and Lesbian armed forces after failed revolts in 439 and 427 respectively, and Chios went on contributing ships till its own revolt in 412. A whole variety of cities contributed ground troops throughout the fifth century (Thucydides 2.9; 7.57; Diodorus 12.42; Pausanias 5.10.4; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 34).

On the other hand, it also suited Athens well to have the cities pay cash. To remain a great power in the Aegean, Athens would need a larger fleet than any other polis; this arrangement effectively had the other cities pay for the Athenian fleet. Most of

their tribute ended up in the pockets of the poorer Athenian citizens, in the form of pay for rowing in the fleet. As Thucydides explains (1.99), "The result was that the Athenian navy grew strong at the cities' expense, and when they revolted they always found themselves inadequately armed and inexperienced in war."

The overall result was that Samos, Chios, and Lesbos shared some of the human costs of war with Athens, but could not begin to challenge Athenian leadership of the united fleet. Athens not only controlled the association's foreign policy, but also monopolized the major instrument of coercion within the Aegean. With this they could compel would-be free riders like Karystos to pay tribute, and could prevent other cities from backing out of their obligations.

(c) *General peace*. A century later, Isocrates (4.104) noted that the political system created in 477 provided general peace in the Aegean. As so often, Isocrates had a polemical point to make, but we should bear in mind that (unlike in the sixth century) we never hear of Athens' subject cities fighting one another. Presumably the Athenian monopoly of state violence made this impossible. Athens intervened regularly in civil strife within the cities, almost always in support of pro-democratic factions (Old Oligarch 1.14; 3.10; Plato, *Seventh Letter* 332b-c; Aristotle, *Politics* 1307b22). Before 431, this must have kept civil wars to a minimum, although once the Peloponnesian War broke out, anti-democratic factions could rely on Spartan assistance, and the level of violence escalated dramatically (Thucydides 3.82).

2. *Economic institutions*

Athens took four major steps: (a) the creation of centralized taxation, on a much larger scale than had ever been seen in Greece; (b) the creation of a central market; (c) the imposition of a single coinage; and (d) opening up the physical resources of the Aegean to central exploitation.

(a) *Centralized taxation*. Greek states famously avoided all forms of regular direct taxation. Athens, however, succeeded in creating two kinds of tax, which produced vastly greater revenue flows than any Greek state had seen before (see Thucydides 1.80;

Demosthenes 23.209; Andreades 1933: 3-193). The most important was the tribute (*phoros*) assessed by Aristides and his successors, controlled by the Athenian *hellenotamiai*. A few cities paid in kind, providing military services; most exchanged cash for security. Our sources never refer to the tribute as a tax, but this was how it functioned. The second form was taxes on the use of harbors, and particularly on goods passing through the Hellenspont.

We do not know what it cost to build triremes. Augustus Boeckh (1840: 196-210, with Eddy 1968: 189-92) assembled the relevant sources and estimated perhaps one talent for the hull and another talent for the equipment, with prices rising through time. Vincent Gabrielsen (1994: 139-42) has emphasized the problems with this calculation, but offers no alternatives, and as a rough rule of thumb, Boeckh's best guess must stand. At different points during the fifth century, depending on rates of pay (Loomis 1998: 36-45), it probably cost between half a talent and a full talent to keep a trireme at sea for a month. The Athenians built 100 or 200 triremes in 483 BC from the state's share of the proceeds of a huge silver strike (Herodotus 7.144). Even after this initial outlay, keeping a fleet of 200 ships at sea for a three-month summer campaign must have cost something like 500-1000 talents, by the time we have figured in repairs and replacements (if each ship lasted around twenty years, as seems likely, even without losses in battle an average of ten new triremes would be needed each year). Plutarch (*Pericles* 11) even says that Pericles kept sixty ships at sea for eight months each year in the 440s, which would have cost at least 250-300 talents per annum in wages in peace time.

Controversy surrounds the precise size of the tribute in the years before 454. Thucydides (1.96) says that the *phoros* amounted to 460 talents in 477 BC. The tribute lists beginning in 454 generally record revenues closer to 400 talents. Given that Athens controlled more cities in and after 454 than in 477, some historians have concluded that the number in Thucydides' text is wrong, or includes the cash equivalent of ships and their crews as well as the money actually paid, even though Plutarch (*Aristides* 24) accepted Thucydides' figure, and Diodorus (11.47) put it even higher, at 560 talents. Whatever the correct figure, we should note that the tribute would barely cover the fleet's expenses even in the few years without major wars. However, the campaigns against Persia in the 470s-450s were highly profitable (Plutarch, *Cimon* 9-13), and other forms of

tax augmented the tribute (see below), so that Athens actually built up a large cash reserve. In 431, the treasury held 6000 talents, and at one point had reached 9700 talents (Thucydides 2.13).

But when Athens had to fight serious wars, the tax base proved inadequate. The war against Samos in 440/39 cost either 1200 or 1400 talents (Diodorus 12.28; *IG* i^3 363), and the siege of Potidaea in 431/0 at least 2000 talents (Thucydides 2.70). Athens imposed an indemnity on Samos (Thucydides 1.117), and probably did so on other rebels, but then had to reduce their tribute payments while they were paying off the costs of wars against them. Estimates of the total cost to Athens of the 27 years of the Peloponnesian War range from 35,000 to 47,500 talents (Andreades 1933: 222). Despite Athens' financial strength in 431 BC (Thucydides 2.13), the costs of war shocked everyone. In 428, Athens was supporting larger armed forces than ever before (Thucydides 3.17; on the authenticity of the passage, Kallet-Marx 1993: 130-34), and Thucydides (3.13) has the Mytileneans give Athenian financial exhaustion as one of their reasons for rebelling that year.

The war against Persia had been the impetus for the original creation of the tribute in 477, and the war against Sparta forced a major escalation in the 420s. Plutarch (*Aristides* 24) says that the tribute grew from 460 talents in 477 BC to 600 in 431 BC, and 1300 talents in the 420s (cf. [Andocides] 4.11). The Thoudippos Decree of 425 BC expressly says that the "tribute … has become too little" (*IG* i^3 71.16-17), and imposes an exceptional reassessment, increasing the revenue demanded to between 1460 and 1500 talents (although Athens may not have received that much). Increasing the tribute also increased the transaction costs of its collection. The number of officials involved proliferated, and Thucydides repeatedly refers to Athens sending out special ships to extract payment (2.69; 3.19; 4.50, 75). A Scholiast on Aristophanes (*Knights* 1070) adds that the men commanding these ships "made great profits." Athens took drastic steps to tighten up collection procedures in the early 420s (*IG* i^3 34, 52, 68), and some cities fell behind on their payments (*IG* i^3 61). Athens took out loans from the sanctuaries of Athena Polias and Athena Nike adding up to nearly 6000 talents between 433 and 423 BC (*IG* i^3 369), and in 428 Athens' citizens voted to impose a direct tax, or *eisphora*, on themselves. Thucydides (3.19) says that this was the first time Athens had ever done this,

and that it brought in 200 talents. *IG* i^3 21 also refers to an *eisphora* in Miletus, probably in 426/5 BC, although we do not know whether this was imposed by Athens or by the Milesians themselves.

The burden of taxation via tribute grew drastically in the 420s. But the greatest gap in our knowledge is precisely who paid the tribute in each city. No source ever tells us. Finley (1978a: 125) suggested that "If the normal Greek system of taxation prevailed—and there is no reason to believe that it did not—then the tribute for Athens was paid by the rich, not the common people." In fact, poleis normally tried to cover public expenditures by combining regular liturgies on the rich (*enkyklioi*) with income derived from the sale or leasing of public property and indirect taxes on harbors and markets (Andreades 1933: 126-61). We know that for some cities this easily covered the tribute. Herodotus (6.46) says that Thasos' public revenue from mines and other properties was 200-300 talents per year, while their normal tribute payment, starting probably in 443 BC, was 30 talents per year. Given the cities' unanimous approval of Aristides' assessment, we should assume that the tribute was based on the size of the regular public revenues, not on population of the level or private wealth, and that the payment was normally less than the city would have spent for its own security. This means that before 431 the tribute was in effect a direct tax that Athens imposed on the cities, which they covered largely from their own public property and from local indirect taxes. The sharp increase in tribute in the 420s may have strained public resources, forcing cities to turn more often to irregular liturgies (*prostaktai*), "donations" (*epidoseis*), and even special direct taxes (*eisphorai*). If so, then under the pressure of war the tribute was partially being converted into an Athenian direct tax on the local elites.

In 413 Athens suspended the tribute and instead imposed a tax of 5% on all goods passing through the harbors of the subject cities (Thucydides 7.28). Thucydides suggests that this was an attempt to increase revenues. If, as is widely assumed, the tribute was bringing in roughly 900 talents each year between 418 and 414, then the Athenians must have thought that they would be able to tax more than 18,000 talents worth of seaborne trade per annum. Alternatively, in the wake of the Sicilian disaster, the Athenians may have felt that despite all the costs involved in collecting an indirect tax, it was likely to be more popular with the cities and to produce a higher yield than trying to enforce the hated

tribute. But the shift to an indirect tax on trade was presumably less successful than the Athenians had hoped, because tribute-collection seems to have resumed by 410. Xenophon (*Hellenica* 1.1.22) says that in the same year Athens established a 10% tax on all goods passing through the Hellespont, although Kallias' financial decree (*IG* i^3 52.7), probably passed in 422/1, refers to a "10% tax," which may be the same one.

(b) *Central market*. Money flowed into Athens, which rapidly became one of the leading marketplaces in the Mediterranean. The Old Oligarch (1.18) recognized the financial side-effects of having such a busy mercantile center, not least the revenues raised by the 1% tax on all imports and exports through the Piraeus. Perhaps even more importantly, Athenian spending-power was a magnet tying together trade networks over large areas. Writing probably in the 420s, the comic poet Hermippos described in mock-Homeric language the goods that flowed into the harbor:

> From Cyrene silphium-stalks and ox-hides, from the Hellespont mackerel and all kinds of salt-dried fish, from Thessaly salt and sides of beef, from Sitalkes an itch to plague the Spartans, from Perdikkas lies by the shipload. Syracuse provides hogs and cheese—while as for the Corcyreans, may Poseidon destroy them in their hollow ships, because they are of divided loyalty. These things then come from those places; but from Egypt we get rigged sails and papyrus, from Syria frankincense, while fair Crete sends cypress for the gods, and Libya provides plenty of ivory to buy. Rhodes provides raisins and dried figs, while pears and fat apples come from Euboea, slaves from Phrygia, mercenaries from Arcadia. Pagasai furnishes slaves, and branded rascals at that. The acorns of Zeus and glossy almonds come from the Paphlagonians, and are the ornaments of a feast. Phoenicia provides the fruit of the palm and the finest wheat flour, Carthage supplies carpets and cushions of many colors. (Hermippos, *The Porters* frag. 63, trs. Davies 1978: 110-11; cf. Old Oligarch 2.7; Thucydides 2.38)

The Piraeus became the clearing-house for the Aegean, and retained this function even after the defeat of 404 (Isocrates 4.42).

(c) *Single coinage, weights, and measures*. Probably in 425/4, Klearchos moved a decree (*IG* i^3 1453) stipulating that all mints for local silver coinages in the cities would be closed, and that henceforth the entire Empire would use Athenian weights, measures, and coinage. There has been much argument over the causes and consequences of this decree.

Many historians have imagined cynical Athenian attempts to profit by increasing the use of silver mined in Attica, or to gain on the exchange rate offered on local coinages. On the whole these arguments are not very convincing (see Figueira 1998: 227-47). Thomas Martin's argument (1984: 196-207; cf. Lewis 1987: 60-63; Figueira 1998: 259-95) that the switch to Attic standards made the collection of the tribute and the Eleusinian First Fruits vastly easier is a far more convincing explanation of Klearchos' intentions. But operating with a single currency must also have facilitated trade. There is no sharp metrological boundary (either in the early 440s or mid 420s) indicating an abrupt switch to Athenians standards, which may mean that the decree had little immediate impact; but there was nevertheless a general drift in this direction during the fifth century (Figueira 1998: 296-315). Whether through this decree or through countless individual decisions, Athenian standards gradually came to provide a single system of weights and measures within the Aegean, lowering the transaction costs of trade.

(d) *Centralization of resources*. Nearly all poleis jealously guarded access to the basic source of wealth, the land, by restricting ownership to citizens. Athens systematically undermined this, opening land ownership in the subject cities to Athenians. This was done partly through official seizures of land and partly through private initiative.

Official seizures took two forms, colonies (*apoikiai*) and clerouchies (*klerouchiai*). Colonies were founded as self-governing cities in "empty" territory. They could take several forms. The oldest, going back to the eighth century, involved the occupation of what seemed to the Greeks to be unclaimed lands outside the Aegean, as when Athenians and other Greeks resettled the abandoned territory of Sybaris in Italy as the new colony of Thourioi in 444/3 (Diodorus 10.3-7; Plutarch, *Nicias* 5; Fornara 1983: no. 108). The seizure of Ennea Hodoi from the non-Greek Thracians in 465 (Thucydides 1.100) was a similar operation, although in this case the Thracians fought back and massacred the Greeks. But Athens developed a new version of colonization, involving the military expulsion of the population of hostile cities and their replacement by Athenian citizens, as at Aegina in 431, Potidaea in 430, and Melos in 416 (Thucydides 2.27, 70; 5.116; Figueira 1991).

Clerouchies, on the other hand, involved Athenians taking over part of the territory of other cities, which continued to be occupied by their original populations. There is some ambiguity in the sources over whether the Athenians actually relocated to their new lands, or stayed in Athens and extracted rents from these lands (Jones 1954: 168-74; Brunt 1966). Like the colony, the clerouchy was an old institution. Athens had settled 4000 men in Chalcis after winning the war of 506 (Herodotus 5.77), and an unrecorded number on Salamis around the same time (*IG* i^3 1). During the fifth century, at least 15,000 Athenians (and perhaps closer to 20,000) out of a citizen population peaking around 40,000 in the 430s obtained land in colonies in clerouchies.

Isocrates (4.107) claimed that the Athenians did all this "for the protection of the cities' territories, not for our aggrandizement," but Plutarch had a very different view. Focusing on the demographic/political consequences, he suggested that Pericles "relieved the city of a large number of idlers and agitators, raised the standards of the poorest classes, and, by installing garrisons among the allies, implanted at the same time a healthy fear of rebellion" (Plutarch, *Pericles* 11). Some historians believe that Plutarch's view was colored by Roman colonial practices, but it does seem that clerouchs and colonists came largely from the poorer citizens (e.g., *IG* i^3 46.40), and there is other evidence of Pericles' concern to limit the number of Athenians ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 26.4; Plutarch, *Pericles* 37).

But whatever its other results, the Athenian land-grab also opened up the basic economic resources of the empire to centralized exploitation. Virtually all Greek cities limited land ownership to their own citizens. By taking control of land all over the Aegean, Athens was making the most serious assault on the principle of polis autonomy since the Spartan annexation of Messenia in the eighth century. The Athenians could of course claim that colonies and clerouchies were very traditional institutions; but alongside this "official" land-grab, we also hear of individual Athenians obtaining land in the subject cities. No source systematically discusses this, but several make passing references to Athenians owning such land (e.g., Plato, *Euthyphro* 4c; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.8.1; Andocides 3.15; *IG* i^3 118.20-22). The most astonishing evidence comes from the inscriptions recording the state auction of the property of the men involved in the mutilation of the herms and profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries in

415 BC. The otherwise unknown Oionias held land in Euboea valued at 81 talents and 2000 drachmas. One Nicides also held land in Euboea, and Adeimantos had a farm on Thasos (*IG* i^3 422.177, 311; 424.15, 17, 150; 426.53), and there is a reference to the sale of unharvested crops in the Troad (*IG* i^3 430.1). Oionias' property is worth far more than that of any other known Athenian, and Finley (1978a: 123) suggested that Thucydides' well known comment (8.48) that the *kaloikagathoi*, the Athenian upper class, were the main beneficiaries from the Empire, must be referring to such acquisitions of property.

The Athenians did not create an Aegean-wide land market, since (other than Lysias' reference [34.3] to rights of inter-marriage [*epigamia*] between Athens and Euboea) there is no sign that non-Athenians could buy property in Attica. The anger of the subject cities about Athenians taking over their land (Diodorus 15.23, 29) also suggests that this was a one-way process. The Athenians wanted to break down the centuries-old boundaries around individual poleis, but only in their own favor. We should see their seizure of Thasos' mines on the Thracian mainland in 465 (Thucydides 1.100) in this light, and perhaps also Thucydides' reference (4.105) to his own family having mining interests in this area. These were blatantly exploitative steps.

3. *Administration*

In this sphere Athens took three major steps: (a) the creation of an inter-polis ruling class of Athenian administrators; (b) interference in the constitutions of the subject cities; and (c) the centralization of legal processes.

(a) *Central ruling elite.* Athens set up a network of what are usually called "imperial magistrates" (Balcer 1976; 1977) across the Aegean. [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 24.3) refers to 700 *archai*, or offices, at Athens itself, and a further 700 outside Athens. The Old Oligarch (1.19) claimed that these *archai* were so ubiquitous that the Athenians learned how to row without realizing by going out to the cities to fill them, and Aristophanes (*Birds* 1021-52) made jokes about them. We have few details about what these Athenian officers did, but their main function seems to have been to tie the cities more closely to Athens, and to make sure Athenian needs were implemented on the ground.

Like the land-grab, these Athenian magistrates were a major break with polis practices. One category, the *proxenoi* (local men who represented Athenian interests to their fellow citizens; Reiter 1991), went well back into archaic times, but others were new. The *archontes* were Athenians resident in the cities, clearly with some significant power (e.g., *IG* i^3 21.77-80; 34.6-7; 156; 1453; Antiphon 5.47). The *episkopoi* were overseers of some kind, probably traveling from city to city (*IG* i^3 14.13-14; 34.7; Aristophanes, *Birds* 1021-34; Harpocration, s.v. *episkopos*), and the *phrouroi* and *phrourarchoi* were some kind of military establishment in the cities (*IG* i^3 .14-15, 38-39, 52, 55; 21.77; Aristophanes, *Wasps* 235-37; Eupolis, *Cities*, fragment 233; Isocrates 7.65; Plutarch, *Pericles* 12).

(b) *Constitutional interference*. The sources agree that Athens generally tried to have the cities run through democratic institutions (Thucydides 3.82; Old Oligarch 1.14; 3.10; Plato, *Seventh Letter* 332b-c; Aristotle, *Politics* 1307b22). Athens would tolerate oligarchy when it was convenient (Old Oligarch 3.11), both had a clear ideological preference for popular government, and a sense that democracies would be more sympathetic to Athens than oligarchies (Thucydides 3.47). A few inscriptions from the 450s onward attest to Athens insisting on democracies after suppressing revolts (*IG* i^3 14; 37; 48).

(c) *Centralization of legal processes*. This was one of the most important administrative dimensions of Athenian state-building. Poleis guarded their legal processes as jealously

as their land, but Athens centralized several key dimensions of the law. Thucydides (1.77) had the Athenians in Sparta in 432 defend themselves against complaints that it was wrong to make members of the subject cities come to Athens for trial; similarly, the Old Oligarch (1.16) insisted that it was morally wrong to make other Greeks sail to Athens for trials, while also recognizing the advantages this brought to Athens. Isocrates (4.113; 12.66) noted that the Spartans had severely criticized Athens for this practice, but defended it, adding that "we governed all the cities under the same laws, deliberating about them in the spirit of allies, not of masters" (4.104). Regulations for cities that had revolted supply some specific details. In a decree probably passed in 446, the Athenians swore that they would not deprive any Chalcidian of his citizen rights, or exile, arrest, or kill any Chalcidian, or confiscate any Chalcidian's property, without a trial and without the consent of the Athenian people; and the Chalcidians agreed that when they were dealing with cases involving penalties of exile, death, or loss of citizen rights, the defendant would have the right of appeal to Athens (*IG* i^3 40.5-10, 71-76). At Erythrae in 453/2, the Athenians tied local and Athenian law together in another way, ruling that anyone exiled from the city for murder would also be exiled from the entire Athenian Empire (*IG* i^3 14.30-33). Antiphon (5.47) even claimed that "it is not permitted—even for a city—to punish anyone by death without the consent of the Athenians." These interventions in local law in the interests of a generalized Athenian justice mark a sharp break with earlier Greek practices.

4. *Culture*

Athens took three major steps: (a) turning Athens into the cultural capital of the Aegean; (b) uniting the cities through the shared symbolism of Athenian coinage; and (c) making ritual claims to be the ancestral home and religious center of all Ionian Greeks.

(a) *Athens as cultural capital*. Thucydides (2.41) had Pericles claim that "our city is the School of Hellas," the cultural center toward which all Greeks had to look. In Plutarch's account (*Pericles* 12-14) of the decision to build spectacular new temples on the acropolis, providing public pay for poor Athenians is once again a major motive; but he has Pericles begin his justification by insisting that the buildings "will bring Athens glory

for all time." Whether Pericles self-consciously sought to make Athens Greece's cultural capital or not, by the 420s it had certainly taken on this role. Artists, authors, scholars, and philosophers flocked to the city to take advantage of the wealth and patronage it afforded. Plato's *Protagoras* and *Ion* give a sense of the cosmopolitan intellectual climate this created. Everyone who was anyone had to come to Athens. Hegemon of Thasos even felt inspired to write a comical account of what it was like to return to his hometown after making good in the big city (ap. Athenaeus 15.698d-99c). Once this cultural dominance had been established, it proved durable, surviving the defeats of 404 and 338, and lasting well into Roman times (Ostwald 1992).

(b) *Shared coinage*. Finley (1978a: 309 n. 47; 1985b: 168-69) emphasized the political dimensions of Klearchos' Coinage Decree (*IG* i^3 1453) over the economic, seeing it largely as an ideological statement of the subjection of the cities. Recent scholarship (e.g., Martin 1984: 196-207; Figueira 1998: 245-58) has sharply criticized this view. The debate has been polarized: while Finley minimzed the economic dimensions of the decree as part of his critique of formalist models, Figueira goes to the opposite extreme in his rejection of substantivism. Leslie Kurke (1999) has powerfully demonstrated the symbolic importance of coinage in Greek thought in the age of Herodotus, and it would be naïve to argue that because the shift toward Attic standards facilitated the collection of tribute and the activities of traders, it did not also make a huge political statement about Athens' claims for the unity of the Aegean.

(c) *Ionian center*. Athens seems to have been at least as self-conscious about "religious politics" as about becoming a cultural center (Schuller 1974: 112-24; 74: Smarczyk 1990). The best known measures were the requirement that the cities send a cow and a panoply of armor to Athens for the Great Panathenaea festival. This is first documented in the regulations for Erythrae in 453/2 (*IG* i^3 14), when it may have been a special provision; but by the time of Thoudippos' decree in 425, it was required of all the cities. A highly probable restoration of the fragmentary inscription adds the significant detail that the cities' representatives are to walk in the procession "like colonists" (*IG* i^3 71.57-58). Athens had asserted a claim to be the ancestral home of all the Ionian Greek since at

least 600 BC (Solon, fragment 4 [West 1991/92]), and judging from Herodotus (1.147; 5.97; 8.62), Athenians and Ionians alike took this claim seriously.

If Mattingly is right in down-dating to the 420s many of the inscriptions formerly placed in the 440s, it begins to look as if Athens started to push its genealogical claims over the cities much harder once the Peloponnesian War broke out (e.g., *IG* i^3 34.41-43; 46.11-12). A mother-city could expect a certain degree of respect from her colonies, and successful Ionianism was potentially a major force for cohesion within the Aegean. In 425, Athens also revived the religious competitions at Delos, the Ionians' most important sanctuary, and purified the island (Thucydides 1.118). Nicias put on a magnificent display, even if it ended badly (Plutarch, *Nicias* 3).

Thucydides (6.76) has Hermocrates of Syracuse say in the debate at Camarina in 415 that shared Ionian heritage had been important in persuading the cities to accept Athenian leadership in 477, but that Athens had then deprived the cities of full independence. In response Euphemos, the Athenian representative, pointed to the fact that the Ionians were Athens' kinsmen, who "willingly accepted servitude." But Thucydides then had Euphemos go on to emphasize Athens' military right to lead (6.82-83), and in other passages justifying Athenian power, the speakers do not appeal to common Ionian descent (e.g., Thucydides 1.75-76; 5.89).

While Thucydides may have considered religious ideology relatively unimportant, the epigraphic record suggests that Athenian state policy put great emphasis on it. A series of inscriptions record Athens setting up sacred enclosures for Athena Mistress of the Athenians (*Athena Athenon medeousa*), at Chalcis (*IG* xii.9.934), on Samos (*SEG* 1.375), and on Aegina (Figueira 1991: 115-20), and when Athens sent a clerouchy to Mytilene in 427, the income of 300 of the 3000 plots of land taken over was given to the support of Athena (Thucydides 3.50). In a decree probably dating to the 420s, the Athenians required all subject cities to offer First Fruits in Eleusis (equivalent to a small tax in kind, of 0.17% on barley and 0.08% on wheat), and inviting all cities in Greece to follow suit (*IG* i^3 78). Apparently many did so, for as late as 380 BC Isocrates (4.31) says that this practice was still common.

5. Discussion

I have argued that the growth of the Athenian Empire was an example of state formation, and that Athens was breaking out of the three-century-old framework of poleis. I opened this essay by suggesting that this perspective would not only help us understand the dynamics of the fifth century better, but would also open new lines of inquiry. I close by discussing two of these.

Why did the tempo of state formation accelerate in the fifth century?

We should immediately note that Athens is not the only example: in the 490s, Gela took over several neighboring Sicilian cities (Herodotus 7.154), before being overshadowed by rapid state-formation around Syracuse after 485. Beginning in the 460s, Argos took over its smaller neighbors in the Argive plain (Herodotus 6.83; Thucydides 6.7; Diodorus 11.65; Strabo 8.6). In 432, Olynthos became the capital of much of the Chalcidice, with many people abandoning their home towns and moving to the new center (Thucydides 1.58); and in 428 Mytilene took over most of Lesbos (Thucydides 3.2).

All these cases seem to have been driven by war or the preparation for war, just as Tilly (1992) suggests was the case in second-millennium AD European state-making. We might see Persian imperialism (Wiesehöfer, this vol.) as an exogenous prime mover in the Aegean. First, the Greeks banded together in the Hellenic League of 481 and beat off Xerxes' attacks. In the peculiar circumstances created by Sparta's withdrawal (or expulsion) from the alliance, Athens was able to concentrate unprecedented levels of capital and the means of coercion after 477. Through the 470s and '60s, Athens and Sparta cooperated, although Thucydides (1.100) says that in 465 the Spartans were sufficiently alarmed by Athens' unprecedented seizure of Thasos' mines that they were prepared to go to war. This cooperation created a terrifying situation for Argos, Sparta's traditional enemy. Humbled at the battle of Sepeia in 494, Argos had lost control of even such tiny neighbors as Mycenae and Tiryns; in the 460s, the Argives rapidly built up their state in anticipation of having to face Sparta alone. Athens' anti-Spartan policy after 462 gave Argos insurance, but when Athens and Sparta moved back together after 421, the Argives renewed their campaign of alliance-making and state-building. In 432, when Athens attacked Potidaea, the Chalcidian Greeks—feeling trapped between Athenian and Macedonian power—accepted a Macedonian suggestion to concentrate themselves at

Olynthos, treating the city as a capital for the entire Chalcidice. Nor were the Chalcidians alone in their fears that year: Thucydides tells us that in 432 “What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear that this caused in Sparta” (1.23). The Spartans were right to be afraid. Athens was richer and more powerful than any Greek state had ever been (Thucydides 2.13). Left to their own devices, the Athenians might have succeeded in concentrating capital and coercion to the point that no alliance could stand against them. Even as it was, it took the disaster of 413 and substantial amounts of Persian gold before Athens succumbed. As a final Aegean example, we should note Mytilene, which after revolting from Athens in 428 on the mistaken assumption that the Athenian strength was weakening, made itself the capital of almost the whole of Lesbos in preparation for the inevitable Athenian attack.

In this model, Persia starts a chain reaction. The war of 480-478 triggers Athenian state formation, which in turn triggers similar processes in other states. Yet there was clearly more going on than this. Sicily provides the most important comparative case, although our evidence is poor. In a frustratingly brief passage, Herodotus (7.154) says that Hippocrates, who was probably tyrant of Gela between 498 and 491, conquered several other east Sicilian cities. He even got the better of Syracuse at the battle of the Helorus in 492, but agreed to be bought off by the surrender of Camarina. In a civil war after his death, his lieutenant Gelon seized control of Gela, and continued Hippocrates’ wars. In 485 Gelon won the greatest prize, Syracuse. He thereupon entrusted Gela to his brother Hiero, and made himself tyrant of Syracuse, founding the Deinomenid dynasty. Once in power, he used mercenary armies to force parts of the population of Camarina, Gela, Megara, and Euboea to relocate to Syracuse, selling the rest into slavery (Herodotus 7.156). This was a different path toward a stronger state than that which Athens followed in the Aegean a few years later, but it was extremely successful. By 481 Gelon had made Syracuse such a great power that the mainland Greeks wanted his help against Persia so badly that they considered making him leader of the entire Greek alliance. In the end they could not bring themselves to do this, and in any case a Carthaginian invasion prevented Syracuse from acting in the Aegean (Herodotus 7.157-62).

Gelon had been readying himself for war with Carthage since 483 (Herodotus 7.163-64; Diodorus 11.20-23), and Herodotus (7.158) has him say in 481 that he had

already fought one bitter war against Carthage. Justin (19.1) sets this war before 489; and other late sources suggest that Carthage had built up a genuine empire in Sardinia and western Sicily since the Persian destruction of Tyre in 539 (Asheri 1988: 748-53). We might speculate that Sicilian state formation was in fact driven by fear of Carthage, just as Athenian was driven by fear of Persia, and Diodorus (11.20) even claims that Carthage and Persia had made an alliance to attack the Greek world from both directions in 480. But most historians are skeptical about these stories (see Asheri 1988: 767-68), and it is clear that Herodotus thought that the expansion of Geloan and Syracusan power was entirely the result of Hippocrates' and Gelon's ambition, not Sicilian fear of Carthage.

There are similarities and differences between Athenian and Syracusan paths toward state-building in the early fifth century. Fear of Persia gave Athens the opportunity to concentrate capital from all over the Aegean, and then to use this capital to build ships and hire oarsmen, thereby concentrating the means of coercion needed to generate further capital. Gelon, on the other hand, took the capital and armed forces already on hand in Gela after Hippocrates' victories and whatever he took over in Syracuse, and hired mercenary armies (we know nothing about Hippocrates' methods in the 490s). With these troops he relocated populations to build state power and generate further capital. Just as Cimon's wars against Persia generated wealth and increased Athens' prestige, Gelon's victory over Carthage in 480 yielded fabulous plunder, and inspired many Sicilian cities that had previously opposed Syracuse to submit (Diodorus 11.25-26).

Syracusan state-building unraveled in the 460s with the fall of the Deinomenid dynasty, only to be renewed in the 450s and '40s during the great struggle with Douketios, leader of the local Sicel population. By the 420s Syracuse had control of almost all the Dorian cities. In 433/2 Athens entered into alliances with Leontinoi and Rhegion (*IG* i^3 53, 54), and apparently saw Sicily as relevant to its geopolitical position (Thucydides 1.36). When Syracuse moved against Leontinoi in 427, the Athenians sent twenty ships to help their new ally, though Thucydides (3.86) says that the real goals were to cut off Sicilian grain supplies to the Peloponnese and to explore the possibility of an Athenian take-over. The intense Syracusan-Athenian struggle between 415 and 413, followed by an almost equally severe war between Syracuse and Carthage between 409

and 405, laid the foundations for a dramatic expansion of the Syracusan state under Dionysius I. In the early fourth century Syracuse was even more powerful than Athens at the height of its power (Caven 1990).

Athens and Syracuse began concentrating capital and the means of coercion in different ways, and the forms of both were different in each state. Each state pursued its own power with the means that made most sense in its own context. In both cases, state formation proceeded through a combination of war against non-Greek enemies and partial absorption of weaker Greek cities. Nothing about this was predetermined. Had Persia and Carthage both won in 480, the Greeks might have been absorbed into larger empires. Had Sparta had its way in 478, state formation might not have taken off so quickly in the Aegean; had Gelon been less dynamic, Gela might have remained the dominant Sicilian power through the 480s. I suggest that the level of capital accumulation in early fifth-century Sicily and the Aegean, in combination with developments in the level of military technology and growing external pressures, created an environment in which state formation was a logical outcome.

Why did fifth-century state formation fail?

The Greater Athenian state collapsed because Athens lost the Peloponnesian War; and Thucydides (2.65) says Athens lost the war because after Pericles' death democratic leaders were too busy fighting each other to focus properly on Sparta. Yet none of the other examples of fifth-century state formation mentioned above can really be considered a success either. Athens itself destroyed Mytilene's union of Lesbos in 427. Argos kept control of the Argive plain through the rest of the classical period, and even briefly formed a union with Corinth in 392, but never threatened to become more than a regional power. Olynthos also survived the Peloponnesian War, before being captured by Sparta in 379, and destroyed by Macedon in 348. Syracuse was more successful at state formation than any other polis, but seems to have been trapped in a cyclical process of centralization and collapse. The Greater Syracusan state fell apart after the fall of the last Deinomenid in 465, only to revive in the 450s. It reached its apogee under Dionysius I in the 370s, collapsing again in the 350s. Agathocles seized control in 316 and renewed

Syracusan power for a third time. The Greater Syracusan state did not survive the First Punic War (264-246), and Marcellus' savage sack in 212 devastated the city.

Why did no polis break the bounds of the city-state system? Reviewing some of these data, Gary Runciman concludes that the polis was an evolutionary dead-end. He explains that "A dead-end is where institutional evolution stops although the environment is changing, and the type of society in question becomes extinct through incapacity to adapt to that change" (Runciman 1990: 349). He suggests that

> The *poleis* were stuck fast in all three dimensions: coercively, they were restricted by their failure to extend citizen roles to aliens (as Rome was later to succeed in doing); economically, they were restricted by their failure to expand beyond small-scale trade and commerce (as Venice was later to succeed in doing); and ideologically, they were restricted by their failure to formulate an ideology of legitimacy going beyond local particularism and communal self-defence (as Byzantium was later to succeed in doing). (Runciman 1989: 327)

Runciman makes a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* argument, that because no polis broke through to a stronger form of statehood, then no polis could possibly have done so. I disagree. The upheavals of the eighth century created the framework within which the *poleis* developed, but the evidence I presented in section 4 above shows that fifth-century Athens was evolving in the direction of a territorial state, and the scantier sources for Syracuse suggest that the same was true there.

Runciman's comparison of fifth-century Athens with Rome, Byzantium, and Venice does not resolve the issue, because these were all mature imperial powers, while Athens was still in a relatively early stage of state formation when cut off by Sparta in 404. Had Athens won the war it might have developed exploitative, commercial, and ideological structures every bit as powerful as those in later Mediterranean empires; we have no way of knowing. To explain why fifth-century state formation failed, we need to look at the empirical evidence in more detail.

In section 1 I pointed to four possible factors.

International balancing

All efforts at state-building generated coalitions of states resisting the aggressor. This had been particularly true before 500 BC, when hoplites were the decisive military weapon,

and power depended on manpower and discipline rather than on capital concentration. Sparta was much the strongest state (Herodotus [1.56, 59] says that around 546 Athens vied with Sparta for this distinction, but Athens "was being held subject and split up by Pisistratus"). Sparta had an unusually effective army in the Dark Age, and whereas most Aegean states responded to the problems of the eighth century by developing structures of egalitarian male citizenship, Sparta conquered neighboring Messenia and reduced its population to serfdom. Messenian labor then supported Sparta's ever-more effective hoplite army. Sparta renewed its expansion in the early sixth century, but reached the limits of its military striking power in wars with Tegea in the 560s (Herodotus 1.66-68). Sparta had to abandon state-building through annexation and serfdom, and built up a loose Peloponnesian League, Sparta was generally recognized as the leading power all over Greece, and automatically took charge of the anti-Persian alliance in 481. By the 420s, Sparta had reached the limits possible with the military and financial means available. Within the Peloponnese, it could usually get its way through diplomacy and threats, but it had great difficulty enforcing its wishes outside the Peloponnese, as it found at Athens in 510 and 506.

The creation of the giant Athenian fleet in 483 and its expansion to a general Aegean fleet in 477 dramatically altered the concentration of coercive force, and Aristides' success in organizing the cities gave Athens the concentration of capital it needed to support the fleet. So long as the Athenians fought against individual islands or Ionian cities, this concentration was overwhelming. But when they tried to extend their power beyond this maritime core they triggered balancing coalitions under Sparta. This forced Athens to make even more ambitious attempts to turn the resources of other parts of Greece (and even Egypt) against Sparta (Davies 1978: 49-146). After being rebuffed by Sparta in 462, Athens made alliances with Megara, Thessaly, and Argos in 460/59, and this led directly to the First Peloponnesian War. The Athenians unleashed astonishing energies, fighting simultaneously everywhere from the North Aegean to Boeotia, and from Egypt to Phoenicia (Thucydides 1.102-115; *IG* i^3 1147). But in 447 the effort of fighting so many enemies led to revolts, and in order to keep their subjects in place the Athenians had to agree to retreat to their Aegean core. Pericles' strategy was to avoid such imperial over-reach and to build up strength within the subject cities, but after his

death Athenian attempts to overthrow the Spartan alliance again drew them into adventures in Boeotia and western Greece. Most Athenians were apparently quite ready to recognize the limits of their power in 421 and to negotiate a peace based roughly on the status quo ante (Thucydides 5.13-51). Those who believed that this was a mistake—most prominently Alcibiades—pushed for even more ambitious efforts to break the equilibrium, culminating in the decision to invade Sicily in 415 (Thucydides 6.8-32). Even more so than in 447, the disaster of 413 opened the door to serious revolts.

The evidence for Syracuse is poorer, but the general pattern is much the same. Where the Athenians dominated their subjects through the fleet, the Deinomenids relied on mercenary armies. These created severe demands for cash, which the tyrants met by extraordinary extractions. In 465 Thrasybulus lost control of the situation; the dynasty was overthrown and democracy established at Syracuse. In the 450s the subject cities gradually escaped Syracusan authority. The great struggles against Athens and Carthage meant that when Dionysius I seized the city in 405 he had access to far greater resources than the Deinomenids, but his spectacular wars were an even greater strain on state finances. [Aristotle]'s *Oeconomica* book 2 tells stories of the extraordinary lengths he went to in pursuit of revenues, including the creation of regular direct taxes on land and flocks. His forty-year-reign is the most spectacular example of Greek state-formation, but by the 360s Syracuse's wars had exhausted the manpower and capital reserves of Sicily, leading to a systemic collapse.

Both Athens and Syracuse were powerful enough to create equilibria in which they controlled more cities, more directly, than any earlier Greek state; but trying to go further led to collapse. Athens retreated to a core Aegean zone in 446, and as late as 421 many Athenians saw this as the logical place to draw a line. This could have been the core of a robust territorial state. Even after the Sicilian disaster and the influx of Persian gold, Sparta was ready to negotiate for peace in 406, and had it not been for the blunders leading to Aegospotami in 405 (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.1.20-30; Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 36-37; *Lysander* 9-12), Athens might have preserved this core Aegean state. Pericles' strategy between 446 and 428 was probably right. Similarly, Syracuse never came close to defeating Carthage (despite Diodorus' claim [11.24]), but had a long-term core of Dorian cities under its control for most of the period between Gelon's take-over and the

First Punic War. Simply saying that the balance of international power prevented Athens and Syracuse breaking through to a higher level is not enough: we need to specify why they could go this far and no further.

Citizenship

The glaring difference between Greek and Roman expansion—obvious to Philip V of Macedon as early as 217 BC (*IG* ix.2.517)—was that most Greek states defended the boundaries of their citizen groups with a ferocity that Davies (1977/78) has called paranoid. Athens was extreme, defining citizenship from 451/0 onward in terms of double endogamy ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 26.4; Plutarch, *Pericles* 37), and periodically purging the citizen rolls. It required a vote of the full state assembly to admit an individual to citizenship. This happened only rarely in the fourth century, and virtually never in the fifth (M. J. Osborne 1981-83). Only in emergencies did Athens extend citizenship to whole communities (*IG* i^3 127). The result was a closed elite in the Greater Athenian state, rigidly separated from the local communities of subject cities.

Runciman suggests that this restriction limited Athens' coercive power, but given their readiness to hire non-Athenians and even slaves (Hunt 1998) for naval service, it was not citizen manpower but capital that mattered most in this regard. But the exclusion of aliens probably did affect the cohesiveness of the growing state. We might compare the eagerness of many subject cities to revolt after 413 with the remarkable loyalty of the Italian cities two hundred years later, even after Hannibal's crushing victory at Cannae.

Thucydides' own idea of what state-formation was about clearly included the extension of citizenship. He tells us that the Athenian state was originally created by the legendary King Theseus, who incorporated everyone in the territory of Attica:

> From the time of Kekrops and the first kings down to the time of Theseus the inhabitants of Attica had always lived in independent cities, each with its own town hall and its own government. Only in times of danger did they meet together and consult the King in Athens; for the rest of the time each state looked after its own affairs and made its own decisions. There were actually occasions when some of these states made war on Athens, as Eleusis under Eumolpos did against King Erechtheus. But when Theseus became King he showed himself as intelligent as he was powerful. In his reorganization of the country one of the most important things he did was to abolish the separate councils and governments of the small cities and to

> bring them all together into the present city of Athens, making one deliberative assembly and one seat of government for all. Individuals could look after their own property just as before, but Theseus compelled them to have only one center for their political life—namely, Athens—and, as they all became Athenian citizens, it was a great city that Theseus handed down to those who came after him. (Thucydides 2.15)

Most of the steps Thucydides (and presumably many other learned Athenians) attributed to Theseus can be closely paralleled in the fifth-century Empire, but not the extension of citizenship. This restriction probably did limit the Athenians' ability to incorporate their subjects, and formed a barrier to the growth of state powers. But whether it made the polis an evolutionary dead-end in Runciman's sense is another matter. It raises two separate questions: first, would Athens have modified this policy if it had won the Peloponnesian War? And second, could Athens have won the war and continued to expand the state while keeping restricted citizenship?

On the first counterfactual, Athens would have needed compelling arguments to open its citizen group. Some Athenian citizens saw the whole point of *archê* as being to provide themselves with financial support, and when Thucydides (6.17) had Alcibiades say that "The Sicilian poleis have swollen populations made out of all sorts of mixtures, and there are constant changes and rearrangements in the citizen bodies," his point was that such citizens lacked loyalty to their polis, and would be easy to defeat. We cannot know what would have happened had Athens won in 404. Their commitment to a closed citizenry might eventually have imposed structural limits on growth; or, like the Romans in the Social War of 91-89 BC, they might have yielded rights to some of their subjects to incorporate them more fully into the state.

On the second counterfactual, we should note that Syracuse, which inflicted the decisive defeat on Athens in 413, had incorporated many relocated Greeks and mercenaries over the years. This might seem like a strong argument that flexibility in this sphere was decisive, but there is of course more to the comparison than this. A more open policy made it easy for the Syracusan tyrants to build up their strength very rapidly, but in 463 a brutal civil war broke out between the "old" citizens and the "new" ones who had been admitted under the Deinomenid tyrants (Diodorus 11.72-73, 76). We might take this as evidence that more open citizenship was not necessarily the answer to Athens' problems; or as evidence that Athens, like Syracuse, would have incurred great costs by

extending citizenship, and that Runciman is right to see this as a brake on Greek state-building. I will return below to the question of whether Athens could have won the war with its existing citizenship restrictions.

Egalitarianism

Runciman poses the core question

> What, then, was it about the Greek *poleis* which prevented any of them from breaking out of the evolutionary dead-end up against which they found themselves? If there is any single inference to be drawn from the comparison with Rome and Venice, it is simply that the *poleis* were all, without exception, far too democratic. (Runciman 1990: 364)

Civic egalitarianism made any kind of systematic direct taxes on land, labor, or income unthinkable, and even in oligarchies, pressure from the citizenry at large limited the concentration of power. There were certainly movements back and forth between oligarchy, democracy, and sometimes tyranny, usually after states were destabilized in wartime (Gehrke 1985; Berger 1992), but, Runciman suggests,

> All this was, so to speak, polarization of the wrong kind. It all took place within institutional constraints which permitted an alternation between 'oligarchy' and 'democracy' as the Greeks defined them but ruled out the possibility of effective and sustained concentration of power at the top. (Runciman 1990: 365)

But here too the details suggest a different picture. I have argued that the basic structures of egalitarian male citizenship were created in the eighth century, when there was a general shift among the poleis around the shores of the Aegean toward the kind of structures I described in section 1 above. Elitist aristocrats resisted the "middling ideology" of egalitarianism through the seventh and sixth centuries, but shortly before 500 there was a further widespread shift toward this model, which made Greek-style democracy thinkable for the first time (Morris 1997; 1998a; 2000).

The fifth century was in many ways the zenith of the middling ideology. But as noted above, this involved certain contradictions. Athens expanded its democratic system in part by drawing on the *phoros* paid by the subject cities. Much of this went into the pockets of Athenian soldiers and sailors, providing them with a crucial cash buffer

against agricultural uncertainty and the need to depend on elite patronage. The balance of the evidence suggests that the *phoros* did not fund the Parthenon (Kallet-Marx 1989), but if any of it did do so, then according to Plutarch (*Pericles* 12-14) the subject cities massively subsidized the poorer Athenians. Further, the *archê* allowed the Athenians effectively to export class conflict, not only by raising the standard of living of poor clerouchs and colonists, but also by allowing upper-class Athenians to buy up lands outside Attica rather than within it, relieving pressure on the poor. Thucydides (8.48) famously says that the Empire had been even better for rich Athenians than for the poor. At the same time, Athens vigorously promoted democratic power in the subject cities. We might say that locally, the Empire was a great democratizing force, while globally, it enormously increased inequalities. The *phoros* was effectively a direct tax on the cities to fund the power of the center.

Contrary to Runciman's claim, this was the beginning of a major change in Greek state structures, and archaeological evidence suggests that class structures were also changing within the poleis by the late fifth century. Around 500 BC, virtually all forms of elite self-advertisement disappear from the material record in Greece. Rich burials and tomb monuments end; so too lavish individual dedications in sanctuaries; and fifth-century houses are monotonously uniform. This is a panhellenic phenomenon. In the last quarter of the fifth century, though, rich tombs return, and escalate steadily through the fourth. Spectacular houses appear at Eretria and a few other sites by 375 (Morris 1992: 108-155; 1994; 1998a, b; Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994). The increase in elite spending on self-promotion was significant: by my calculations, the Athenian elite spent at least 400-500 talents on tomb-building during the Peloponnesian War (enough to keep a full fleet of 200 ships at sea for most of a summer), and their costs may in fact have run much higher (Morris 1998b: 84-85). I have suggested that the switch from elite restraint to display was linked to changes in the role of the rich within society. As the costs of war exploded after 430 BC, all states (whether under Athenian control or not) suddenly needed far more cash than previously. Given the absence of regularized taxation, this made the poleis much more dependent on the generosity of the rich. There was a renegotiation of the distribution of power and status, one part of which was a new assertiveness on the part of the rich. This began during the Peloponnesian War, and only

accelerated after 404, as military technology advanced still further, but there were no tax-paying states the size of the old Athenian Empire to meet the costs. Ste. Croix's classic (1953) argument that the rich were more selfish in fourth- than in fifth-century Athens is only partly true: the rich did insist more strongly on their right to dispose of their wealth as they chose, but that was in large part because they were having to shoulder more of the burden of financing the state.

Once again, Syracuse moved in the same direction but got there by a somewhat different path. The tyrants set themselves above the egalitarian citizen state, and were even able to impose direct taxes on their own citizens. But this also involved them in even heavier expenditures, as they came to rely almost entirely on mercenaries. Thrasybulus went to war with his own citizens in 466 (Diodorus 11.67-68). Dionysius I apparently needed so many mercenaries that he had to pay very high rates to attract them (Diodorus 14.62). Book 2 of [Aristotle]'s *Oeconomica* is full of anecdotes about his extreme extortionary measures (cf. Xenophon, *Hiero* 4.11), and even suggests that he raised taxes on herding so high that the industry's very existence was threatened (1349b7).

Runciman is mistaken in asserting that the poleis reached a dead-end. Their class relations were changing through the fifth and fourth centuries in response to the realities of international competition. Events in the 420s accelerated not only processes of state formation but also a shift in power toward the rich. The Greater Athenian state was moving toward the model in Figure 2, largely by promoting all Athenian citizens to the status of an elite group ruling and exploiting subject local communities in the cities. Had Athens won the war, I suspect that the financial burdens on the state would have allowed a smaller group of rich citizens increasingly to separate themselves out from the majority of Athenians, particularly if Athens had started to grant citizenship more freely to the leading men (or even whole communities) among the subject population. The weight of a three-century-old tradition of egalitarianism was not easily sloughed off, as the conflicts of the fourth century show, but by 425 Greece was moving toward a more class-divided society. Given the international situation, the only alternative to doing so was to succumb to those states that were able to concentrate more power at the top—like Macedon.

Contingencies

I have argued that in 477 Athens began to move the Aegean toward a state structure like Gellner's agro-literate polity; that defeat in the Peloponnesian War cut off this process; and that had Athens won the war, it would have become the capital of a stable, enduring territorial state. I have suggested that neither balancing by hostile powers, nor the limits on of citizenship, nor civic egalitarianism imposed decisive limits on Athenian state formation. This argument runs counter to Runciman's assertion that the polis was an evolutionary dead-end, and makes the Peloponnesian war the decisive turning-point in Greek history.

So why did Athens lose the war? As ever, we are dependent on Thucydides, who says (2.65) that Athens lost not because the Sicilian expedition was a mistake, but because once Pericles was dead, his would-be successors were too busy feuding over political dominance to support the army and fleet adequately. His words can be interpreted in many ways (Kagan 1987: 419-21), but however we construe them, his detailed narrative only partly bears out his claim. Had intrigues at Athens not led to Alcibiades' recall in 415, the Athenian force might have acted more decisively and taken Syracuse quickly, before an adequate defense could be organized (Thucydides 6.47-50, 60-71). Despite this mistake, Nicias seemed well on the way to reducing the city until Lamachus was killed and Gylippus arrived from Sparta in summer 414 (6.93-7.8). And even as late as 413, after a run of terrible misfortunes, Demosthenes might still have saved the day had the Athenian troops not become so disoriented in the crucial night battle on the heights of Epipolai that they ended up fighting each other (7.42-44). No reader of Thucydides' anguished account can come away unmoved: it was a close run thing. Just a little more luck on that moonlit night could have changed everything.

Thucydides concludes:

> This was the greatest Hellenic action that took place during the war, and, in my opinion, the greatest action that we know of in Hellenic history—to the victors the most brilliant of successes, to the vanquished the most calamitous of defeats; for they were utterly and entirely defeated; their losses were, as they say, total; army, navy, everything was destroyed, and, out of many, only few returned. So ended the events in Sicily. (Thucydides 7.87)

Yet Athens not only survived 413, but fought its way back to near parity with Sparta by 406. As Thucydides (8.96) noted, this was largely because "the Spartans proved to be quite the most remarkably helpful enemies that the Athenians could have had." It took another appalling blunder and the loss of the entire fleet at Aegospotamoi in 405 to seal Athens' fate. Kagan (1987: 419) is surely right to suggest that the civil war that broke out between Cyrus and Artaxerxes when their father Darius II died in the spring of 404 would have completely disrupted Persian support for Sparta. Had the Athenian generals listened to Alcibiades and avoided this catastrophe, Sparta's naval effort might have collapsed by 403.

Had Athens taken Syracuse in 415, then unless Sparta had been able to draw Carthage into the war against them, it is hard to doubt that the addition of Sicilian manpower and resources would swiftly have given them complete victory in the Aegean. Thucydides (6.15) says that one of Alcibiades' goals in urging the attack on Syracuse was to go on to attack Carthage, and when Gylippus heard a rumor in 414 that Syracuse had already fallen to Athens, his first thought was that southern Italy would immediately follow (6.104). It is quite conceivable that had things gone a little differently in 415, a Greater Athenian state would have solidified in the early fourth century and dominated the Mediterranean. The way that Greek mercenaries cut through the Persian Empire in 401-399 suggests that Athens might even have anticipated Alexander's conquests by seventy years. In 395, Persia was able to undermine Agesilaos' invasion by funding an alliance of Greek states against Sparta in the Corinthian War; a complete Athenian triumph in Sicily and the Aegean might have ruled that out.

If, on the other hand, Athens had lost in Sicily but avoided the fiasco of 405/4 to negotiate peace with Sparta after Darius' death, I see no reason why a return to a Periclean strategy of state-building might not have led to an ever more powerful Greater Athenian state in the fourth-century Aegean, and a very different scenario facing Philip of Macedon in the 350s, and Rome after 200.

This is all speculation. But I believe that the evidence suggests that Runciman is wrong to see the Athenian Empire as doomed to failure, and the poleis to extinction. The international environment, systems of citizenship, and ideologies of equality in the classical Aegean all put massive obstacles in the way of would-be state builders. Had it

not been for the peculiar circumstances of the 470s, no state could have developed sufficient concentrations of power to stand a realistic chance of breaking out of the polis system. But the fortunes of war did put Athens in this position. From 477 on, Athens was steadily concentrating capital and control over the means of coercion in the Aegean. In the 420s, the pressure of war accelerated this process of concentration; but battlefield defeats at Syracuse and Aegospotamoi then terminated it. There was no structural reason why Athens could not have won the war, with a little more skill and luck. But once the Athenian Empire had been destroyed in 404, there was no way for any other state to reproduce the political circumstances that had given Athens this opportunity seventy-five years earlier.

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