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## The Athenian Empire (478-404 BC)

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Abstract: In this paper I raise 3 questions: (1) How, and how much, did the Athenian Empire change Greek society? (2) Why did the Athenian Empire (or a competitor state) not become a multiethnic empire like Persia or Rome? (3) In the long run, how much did the Athenian Empire's failure matter? I conclude: (1) The Athenian Empire increased the tempo of state formation in classical Greece and is best understood as an example of state formation not imperialism. (2) Counterfactual analysis suggests that Athens failed to become the capital of a multi-city state because of human error, and as late as 406 BC the most predictable outcome was that Athens would emerge as capital of an Ionian state. (3) Not much.

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## The Athenian Empire (478-404 BC)

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Rough version

### 1. Questions

I begin with three observations about the fifth-century Athenian Empire (Fig. 4.1; also known as the First Athenian Empire, or the Delian League), and then ask three questions about it. First, by the standards of the other empires discussed in this book, it was tiny. It covered just a couple of thousand square miles, barely enough to make a respectable Roman province. Its total revenues were probably between 1 and 2 percent of those of the early Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Fewer than a million people lived in the Athenian Empire at its height, and, compared to Assyria, Persia, Rome, or (in most periods) Byzantium, they were ethnically and culturally remarkably homogeneous—not just all Greeks, but almost all Ionian Greeks. The other empires discussed in this book dwarfed it in almost every sense, and lasted much longer.

Second, for something so seemingly insignificant, it has attracted a remarkable amount of attention. So far as scholarship is concerned, size seems not to matter: the Athenian Empire is more discussed and written about today than any other ancient empire except Rome. If it were worth taking the time to calculate the number of pages written on each empire per square mile of their territory, head of population, or year of existence, I suspect that Athens would easily beat out Rome.

Third, with a few striking exceptions—to which I will return frequently—the dozens of books and hundreds of articles on the empire are mostly rather similar to each other. They pose a narrow range of questions and deploy a still narrower range of methods to answer them. People want to know when the Athenian Empire stopped being a cooperative league and became an imperialist venture; whether the Peloponnesian War was inevitable; and if not, who was to blame for it. In some ways, this vast literature shows classical philology at its outstanding best. It is learned, precise, and operates at a level of technical excellence that few, if any, fields can match. But it is also hard to avoid seeing a certain *1066 And All That* quality to it—the real questions are when Athens became Top Nation and whether this was a Good Thing.

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<sup>1</sup> Xenophon (*Anabasis* 7.1.27) says that the Athenian Empire brought in 1000 talents per year, which, despite all the controversy over the “normal” tribute level, seems to be in the right area (e.g., Meiggs 1972: 258-59). I assume an average wheat equivalent intake of 250 kg/person/year (c. 2000 calories/person/day) and an average cost of 2-3 obols/adult/day in 400 BC prices (Loomis 1998: 35; 1 talent = 6000 drachmas = 36,000 obols). Keith Hopkins (1980: 118-19) plausibly estimates the annual revenue of the Roman Empire in the early first century AD as >824 million sesterces. If one *modius* of what (6.55 kg) cost something like 3 sesterces, we get a conversion rate of 1 drachma (Athenian 400 BC value) = 1.6 sesterces (Roman early first century AD value). The Roman income of say 830 million sesterces would then be worth about 86,500 talents; the Athenian income of 1000 talents, about 9.6 million sesterces (i.e., Athens brought in about 1.2 percent of the Roman figure). Even the inflated demands of 425 BC (tribute of 1460 talents, plus perhaps 500 talents in indirect taxes) would only have been worth a little under 20 million sesterces, or 2.3 percent of the Roman income.

This presents us with something of a paradox—a tiny empire surrounded by a vast but narrow rampart of scholarship. The obvious question to ask is why this should be so, and I think the answer is not far to seek: Thucydides. Rarely does a single author so dominate the way we perceive an empire. But there is more to it than simply a source problem. Thucydides’ prose, by turns tortured and sublime, held a central place in western elite education through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. His text was a cultural icon in the fullest sense. It raised profound questions about leadership, ethics, power, and war. Any scholar who could cast light on the morality of the Athenian Empire, the culpability of its leaders, how Thucydides had written his masterpiece, or how truthful it really was—whether through philology or through putting back together inscriptions touching on Thucydides’ subject matter—had something important to say. Historical study of the Athenian Empire became a kind of exegesis of Thucydides.

In this essay I want to take a different approach. There are three things I want to know about the Athenian Empire:

- 1) How, and how much, did the Athenian Empire change Greek society?
- 2) Why did the Athenian Empire (or one of its competitor states) not become a major multiethnic empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome?
- 3) In the long run, how much did the failure of the Athenian Empire (and its competitor states) matter?

For all its strengths, the existing literature does not answer these questions. In fact, it obscures them. I suggest that this is not because the evidence is inadequate (though it certainly has its problems), but because ancient historians have been quite content to continue asking the same questions that were popular in the nineteenth century. As a result, there has not been much reason to think about the kinds of methods we need to answer more analytical questions like the three I ask here.

In section 2, I review the evidence and the main trends in the twentieth-century historiography. In section 3, I explain the methods that I deploy in this paper, which involve comparative and counterfactual methods that classical historians (indeed historians generally) do not use much, but which are well established in the social sciences. To answer my three questions I have to break them down into a series of smaller and more focused questions, defining the categories of analysis as closely as possible. These smaller questions, which I analyze in detail in sections 6, 7, and 8, raise all the issues outlined in this volume’s introduction, and more. Therefore in section 4 I define some of my basic concepts, and in section 5 set out the basic parameters of the world of the Athenian Empire—ecology, demography, economics and standards of living, technology, social structure, politics, and religion.

Briefly, my answer to the first question is that the major change that the Athenian Empire wrought in Greek society was to accelerate the tempo of state-formation, both within its own territory and by stimulating secondary state-formation elsewhere. I explain what I mean by state-formation in sections 4.1 and 4.2. I suggest that calling the political organization that the Athenians ruled in the fifth century an “empire” is something of a misnomer. Classicists have worried a lot about exactly what Thucydides meant when he used the word *archê* to describe the political organization that the Athenians led, but have worried far less about what they mean when they use the English word “empire” as a

translation for *archê*. I suggest that this has caused some confusion: our analytical tools will be much more precise if we translate *archê* as meaning something like “Greater Athenian state” and distinguish it from multiethnic empires like the Assyrian, Persian, Roman, and Byzantine. This distinction becomes very important for my argument in section 7. However, because the expression “Athenian Empire” has now entered standard historical parlance, it would be pedantic to ignore it systematically. I therefore retain it in this essay, but use it throughout as a colloquial expression for “Greater Athenian state.” I argue that Athens was not solely responsible for speeding up the tempo of state-formation in the fifth century, but did massively contribute to this acceleration. War and preparation for war drove state-formation, which speeded up dramatically in the 420s. But that said, even by 404 neither Athens nor her rival states had succeeded in centralizing state power enough to become the capital of a durable, territorial Greek state. Where I think my argument departs from earlier treatments is in suggesting that had Athens avoided defeat in 404, this process of state-formation would have continued, and during the fourth century Athens would have broken through to become the capital of an Aegean-wide territorial state.

This brings me to my second question: why did the Athenian Empire (or one of its competitor states) not become a major multiethnic empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome? The answer here has to be rather more complicated. First, I argue that Athens was the only polis that ever had a serious chance of becoming the capital of a territorial state. The second part of my argument is that this in fact was a more plausible and predictable outcome than its collapse in 404. As early as the 470s interstate politics in the Aegean reached a stable equilibrium point, with a balance between a centralizing Greater Athenian state and a looser Spartan alliance. My third point is that there was nothing inevitable about Athens’ failure: in the end it came down to errors by individual leaders. Even after the defeat of the Sicilian expedition, the most likely result of the Peloponnesian War was still a return to the *status quo ante*. Only the spectacular disaster at Aegospotamoi was enough to shock Athens out of this equilibrium position. I am then in a position to offer an answer to my question: had Athens avoided this shock, demographic and economic conditions would have favored its emergence as the capital of a territorial state in the first half of the fourth century, and possibly also its takeoff to become a major Mediterranean empire.

Finally, how much did this matter? If Athens had overcome Sparta, then Persia, then Carthage, and then even Rome, how much impact would this have had on world history? I make two observations here. First, I suggest that in the long run, most things would probably have turned out much the same. To have triumphed over its rival Mediterranean powers in the fourth and third centuries BC, Athens would have to have become much more like them, evolving (as Rome did) from a city-state with an unusual amount of territory to the metropolis of a vast empire. The actual outcome, of course, was that Rome conquered the Mediterranean in the second and first centuries BC, shifting this world’s economic and political center of gravity to Italy, only for that center to shift back to the east Mediterranean by the sixth century AD. An Athenian Mediterranean Empire might have partly cut Italy out of this story, but by about AD 500 the general distribution of power and resources might not have been so different.

That said, there is a second level at which substituting Athens for Rome and Constantinople would have mattered a very great deal. The subsequent development of

classical literature, art, philosophy, and science would presumably have been very different without the tension between Rome and *Graecia capta*. The religious history of the Mediterranean—particularly the triumph of Christianity and Islam—may have followed completely other paths, making the world we live in an entirely different place.

## 2. Evidence and approaches

### 2.1 *The sources*

We can divide our evidence into two main types, the written and the unwritten, and the written record into two sub-types, literary and epigraphic. For most purposes, the written evidence is far more useful than the unwritten. More than a century of careful scholarship has given us absolute and relative chronologies for classical Greek material culture that are virtually unparalleled anywhere in the world. In the Athenian Agora, we can confidently date many buildings to a specific decade within the fifth century (Shear 1993), but the hard fact remains that such precision is highly unusual. The nature of material culture, which can be reused and recycled in unpredictable ways, means that even in classical Greece we can normally only date specific archaeological deposits with a margin of error of  $\pm 25$  years. This effectively rules out using archaeology to write most kinds of narrative political history (Snodgrass 1987: 36-66), although archaeology remains a major source for longer-term economic and social history (see sections 4 and 5).

Most of the standard works on the Athenian Empire begin with a review of the written sources (Meiggs [1972: 1-22] is particularly good), so I offer only the briefest summary here.

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 said this. Herodotus is very helpful for the events surrounding Athens’ take-over of the anti-Persian Hellenic League in 478/7, but tells us little thereafter.

Thucydides of Athens dominates research. He 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. He 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 stands at the core of any study, including mine. Interpreting Thucydides is nonetheless highly problematic. Hellenists have debated the issues for two centuries, with few signs of agreement. If anything, the flow of books on Thucydides’ methods of composition, values, and implicit message seems to be accelerating. Most of these books are basically philological, though a few are more influenced by literary theory. 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 contemporary historians, such as Ion of Chios, Hellanicus of Lesbos, and Ktesias, but these 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 survey of Greek history. 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 the reader's 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 led to a boom in record-keeping on stone after 462, and with the transfer of the treasury from Delos to Athens in 454, records of the *aparché* (the one-sixtieth of the tribute given to Athena) allow us to reconstruct the overall tribute payments. Unfortunately, few inscriptions contain precise dating information before the very end of the fifth century, and we rely largely on letter forms to date the stones (Meiggs 1966). Up till just a decade ago, there was general agreement on the appropriate methods for dating stones, but in the 1990s this has fallen apart. This calls for an important digression.

Most epigraphers had agreed since the 1930s 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 suggested 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 letter-carving conventions (his essays are collected in 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 Segesta in western Sicily (*IG i<sup>3</sup> 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 a threshold slab, 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, swayed by the assumption that the letter forms must pre-date 445, preferred Habron, archon in 458/7. In their thorough analysis of the stone, Mortimer Chambers et al. (1990) showed that Mattingly was almost certainly right. Debate goes on (e.g., Henry 1992; 1998; contra, Chambers 1993; 1994; Vickers 1996), but the case for 418/17 is very strong.

Like most technical advances, this creates as many problems as it solves. We can now be fairly confident that one inscription with three-barred sigmas dates well after 446, so clearly there is no reason why others 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 creating a "harshness-of-Cleon trap," in which any assertive decree must come late in the Empire's history.

We might raise two general problems. First, there were other occasions earlier in the fifth century when Athens' extensive commitments might 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 this brought on just such a financial 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 that 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 tribute sums recorded for 454/3 and subsequent years (*IG i<sup>3</sup> 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 really severe financial constraints.

Second, we need not assume that Athens' tougher line was a passive response to financial problems: it could have been driven as much by ideological as by monetary concerns. If this was so, then the early 440s could once again 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).

If we find more examples of Athenian interventions of this kind with secure archon dates, a pattern may start to emerge; but for the present, at least, we must live with uncertainty. The Segesta decree shows that the letter forms do not mean that the extant

inscriptions must date before 445; but on the other hand, the fact that the three-barred sigma could still be used in 418/17 does not mean that every inscription with such a letter form must date so late. In the case of the regulations for Eretria and Chalcis (*JG* i<sup>3</sup> 39, 40), for instance, the traditional date of 446/5—immediately after the well attested revolt of 447/6 (Thucydides 1.114)—strikes me as more plausible than Mattingly’s suggestion of 424/3. But overall, I follow Mattingly’s dates. It would be foolish to suppose that before Pericles’ death Athens was incapable of intervening in the subject cities’ domestic affairs, but on the other hand, all the circumstantial evidence suggests that the 420s saw a significant acceleration of the tempo of state-formation.

Overall, while the written record is substantial, it has systematic biases. Most of the sources date after 430. Even before the new evidence supporting Mattingly’s thesis, every scrap of written evidence relating to the Empire in the period 478–431 fitted into a single book (Hill 1951); downdating most of the inscriptions to the 420s just increases this imbalance. The texts are even more skewed toward Athens. Even the ancient literature not written by Athenians was generally written about Athenians (most obviously, Plutarch’s *Lives*, but to a lesser extent also Herodotus and Diodorus). The sources focus on individuals and politics, and we hear very little from non-Athenians about how they viewed the Empire.

## 2.2 *The historiography of the Athenian Empire*

Richard Saller (1998) has pointed out that Greek and Roman history is a truly international field, with few country-specific traditions. That is largely true of work on the Athenian Empire, in the sense that scholars of every nation have followed philological methods, producing descriptive accounts, with the general synthesis as the master trope. The core questions about the transformation of the Delian League into an Empire, the veracity of Thucydides’ account, and the causes of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War were all established in the nineteenth century. German historians retained their technical superiority in philology and textual criticism until well into the twentieth century, so it is not surprising that so long as literary texts were the only significant sources, German historians produced the most influential syntheses (e.g., Beloch 1912–27; Busolt 1893–1904; Busolt and Swoboda 1920–26). 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 American epigraphers’ painstaking reconstruction of the fragments from the inscribed records of the Athenian tribute lists (Meritt et al. 1939–53). The Second World War delayed scholarly absorption of these publications, but in the 1950s the new data stimulated fierce debates about the character of Athenian imperial exploitation (e.g., de Romilly 1963 [1947]; Ste. Croix 1954/55; Strasburger 1958; Bradeen 1960; Meyer 1963). Eventually a group of major narratives appeared, again mostly in English (Kagan 1969; Meiggs 1972; Ste. Croix 1972; Schuller 1974; overview in Rhodes 1985). The influx of new information meant that these books definitively supplanted nineteenth-century narratives, but neither the questions asked nor the methods used to answer them changed much between the 1850s and 1970s. Three major themes continued to dominate discussion: (1) the story of Athenian exploitation of the allies and the transformation 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 studies in this tradition since the 1970s, but the steady stream of specialist publications has continued. In monograph form, these usually focus on the problems of particular bodies of evidence, such as coinage, *proxenos* inscriptions, or specific decrees; or in article form they tend to examine specific episodes (most notoriously, the Peace of Callias). But while the Athenian Empire has continued to take up a large part of undergraduate courses in Greek history, and is standard fare for graduate seminars in epigraphy, there have been no major reinterpretations in the last quarter-century. Meiggs' description of the attitude in the 1920s perhaps applies equally well to the 1980s and '90s. The downdating of the Segesta decree to 418/17 may stimulate a new group of narratives, although for the time being ancient historians seem to be waiting to see whether professional opinion lines up behind Mattingly's chronology.

In the 1980s German-language scholars drawing on early-modern European *Begriffsgeschichte* studied Athenian concepts of power (e.g., Raaflaub 1979a; 1984; Meier 1986) and the relationships between imperial power over others and the autonomy of free Athenian citizens (e.g., Schuller 1984; Raaflaub 1985). The innovative "Paris School," influenced by structuralism and psychoanalysis, had relatively little to say about the Athenian Empire, although Nicole Loraux's important work on fifth-century constructions of identity touched on it (1979; 1986: 83-88), and Simon Goldhill (1987) produced a valuable study of imperial ritual. Stimulated perhaps by Robert Connor's pioneering re-reading of Thucydides (Connor 1984), something of a Princeton School of treatments of the representation of empire and its Others developed (e.g., Rosenbloom 1995; Dougherty 1996; Kurke 1997; Ober 1998a: 72-121; Balot 1998). But there are few signs of the kind of interest in postcolonial theory and subaltern studies that has affected research on the Roman Empire in the English-speaking world (e.g., Webster and Cooper 1996; D. Mattingly 1997; Woolf 1998). The boundary between "literary" and "historical" studies has remained sharp, and most historians interested in the relationships between empire and culture have put politics and economics first, seeing literature and art as epiphenomena (e.g., Meier 1993; Boedeker and Raaflaub 1998b). There has also been some "epichoric" history, looking at the Empire from the perspective of its member states, but these are primarily philological (e.g., Gehrke 1986; Figueira 1991; 1993), but this has little in common with culturalist analyses of modern imperialism (e.g., Pratt 1992; Said 1993).

Explicitly social-scientific studies have been rare. What little work took place was largely confined to Britain in the 1970s. Wolfgang Schuller (1974: 2-3) borrowed Weber's distinction between *direkte* and *indirekte Herrschaft*, but as Moses Finley (1978a: 306 n. 8) pointed out, Schuller systematically confused ideologies of power and the institutional exercise of power. Finley drew more extensively on Weber's work (1978a; 1978b; 1985: 67-87), calling for more rigorous categories of analysis. He 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) sketched 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 geopolitical analysis, and in the new edition of the *Cambridge Ancient*

*History* Davies (1992) provided a more general review of socioeconomic developments in fifth-century Athens. But the most influential group of younger Greek historians operating within a broadly 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 does not even appear in the indices of these books. Drawing inspiration more from early *Annales* studies, economic anthropology, and prehistoric archaeology than from historical sociology or political science, they produced what nineteenth-century Oxford historians 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, mostly of very high technical quality. I make no claims to contribute to this body of scholarship, hoping instead to help the growth of a more comparative, analytical approach. 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 most influenced my thinking.

### **3. Possible worlds**

The first question that I raised in section 1 was simple enough: how, and how much, did the Athenian Empire change Greek society? But answering it calls for methods very different from those normally employed by Greek historians. Classicists have concentrated their efforts on inductive, internal analysis of the Empire (section 2.2 above). This calls for detailed collection of the evidence and description of the changes that took place in the Aegean between 478 and 404. There is no selection problem with the written sources, since these are few and well known. But there is still room for debate. Where the sources seem to disagree, some historians give Thucydides the benefit of the doubt (e.g., Kallet-Marx 1993), while others distrust him (e.g., Badian 1993).

Selection problems are more acute with the archaeological evidence. Classical archaeologists have concentrated on public monuments, sculpture, and vase painting, and have produced valuable studies of representations and ideologies of empire (e.g., Hölscher 1973; 1998; Castriota 1992; Shapiro 1998). Hoepfner and Schwandner (1994) have argued that the general homogeneity of fifth-century housing reflects democratic ideologies, and I have argued (Morris 1992:108-155; 1998a; forthcoming) that patterns in spending on tombs and houses were driven by long-term trends in the structures of egalitarianism. However, I am not aware of any really detailed studies of the relationships between everyday material culture and the Empire, or of discussions of how the Empire might have interacted with egalitarian ideologies in shaping material culture.

Internal, inductive analysis is vital for answering the question I am posing, and I spend much time on such details below. But by itself, this form of study can never answer the question. Asking how, and how much, the Athenian Empire changed Greek society means making a comparison with how Greek society would have developed had the Athenian Empire not existed. That is, it calls for a *counterfactual argument*. Traditional empiricist analysis can describe how things changed in the course of the fifth century, but cannot make causal statements about these changes. We can only specify the role of the

Athenian Empire in changing Greek society by comparing the way things *actually* turned out with how they *would have* turned out if there had been no Athenian Empire.

This may sound like an alarming proposition. Generations of historians have excoriated those who would play “parlour-games with might-have-beens” (Carr 1961: 97). That has not stopped people, and many well known scholars, in their lighter moments, have turned out essays on the might-have-beens of the past. A recent volume, *What If?*, features Victor Hanson (1998) speculating on the consequences of a Persian victory at Salamis, and Josiah Ober (1998b) on the consequences of Alexander the Great getting killed at the battle of the Granicus, leaving Persia intact. But most such essays are, as Niall Ferguson says, “after-dinner history” (1997: 15), avoiding detailed analysis or even asking what methods we need to evaluate their claims. The basic problem remains: if, as analytic philosophers seem to agree, every causal statement depends on an implied counterfactual, then historians have to confront the issue if they are to address serious questions about the past.

Some historians (but more so, some philosophers of history) respond by repudiating causal argument altogether. Michael Oakeshott, for instance, insisted that doing history was not about analyzing causes, because historians look at specific past events, and “The relation between events is always other events and is established in history by a full relation of the events.” If we seek to identify causes, Oakeshott argued, “we desert historical experience,” because

every historical event is necessary, and it is impossible to distinguish between the importance of necessities. No event is merely negative, none is non-contributory. To speak of a single, ill-distinguished event (for no historical event is securely distinguished from its environment) as determining, in the sense of causing and explaining, the whole subsequent course of events is ... not bad or doubtful history, but not history at all ... There is no more reason to contribute a whole course of events to one antecedent event rather than another ... The concept of cause is ... replaced by the exhibition of a world of events in which no *lacuna* is tolerated. (Oakeshott 1933: 128-29)

There is much good sense in Oakeshott’s position, and it draws on a philosophical tradition going back to Gottfried Leibniz’s *Theodicy*. Long before quantum mechanics, Leibniz suggested that we imagine a vast number of “possible worlds,” existing in parallel. Each world consists of the maximum possible number of “compossible elements,” things that can logically co-exist. Everything that exists in a world at any point of time is the product of everything that has happened previously, and determines everything that will happen subsequently. Changing any one thing in such a world would mean changing the relationships between everything: in order to make it possible for something to happen differently, we would have to change the entirety of the past, which has made the compossible elements in our world what they are. Thinking about how things might have been otherwise in the past requires imagining a completely different world, parallel to and therefore disconnected from the real world that we live in. Hence the logic behind Oakeshott’s position: historians study the past of this world that we inhabit, and as such can only talk about that past as it really was, as a seamless whole. There is no point talking about whether one element or another caused the world to

become what it was at a later point in time, because all the elements necessarily jointly caused that future state, under the compulsion of all the elements that had previously existed. As Geoffrey Hawthorn sums it up, “For Leibniz, a complete understanding of singular things requires us to understand their necessary relation to all other such things ... On this argument, might-have-beens and might-yet-bes have no place in understanding what is” (Hawthorn 1991: 7).

Many philosophers seem to hold positions along these general lines (see particularly D. Lewis 1973). Yet Oakeshott’s argument hardly seems a very good description of what historians actually do. Max Weber pointed this out a century ago, in an essay criticizing the ancient historian Eduard Meyer’s account of historical methods. Meyer argued that the Second Punic War broke out because Hannibal willed it, and that speculating on other outcomes was idle. Weber replied that “If history is to be raised above the level of a mere chronicle of notable events and personalities, it has no alternative but to pose such questions. And so indeed it has proceeded since its establishment as a science” (Weber 1949 [1905]: 164). Like it or not, most historians constantly pose counterfactuals, but leave them implicit and unanalyzed. Jon Elster suggests that “historians ... have been talking counterfactually all the time without recognizing it” (1978: 176).

Elster distinguishes between what he rather inelegantly terms *ontological counterfactualization* (that championed by Leibniz, in which things are as they are because that is the only way they can be in this world, and any change at one point in time means changing all previous history), and *epistemological counterfactualization*, which, he suggests, is closer to what historians and social scientists really do. Rather than parallel worlds, epistemological counterfactualization is about *branching worlds*, in which things can go differently at any specific moment without us having to assume a separate world in which things had always been different. By allowing “two world to be identical up to a point and to diverge from that point onwards (and eventually to reconverge later on),” we can simply ignore many of the tangled arguments over “trans-world identity” and counterparts that have concerned analytical philosophers trying to justify causal explanation (Elster 1978: 177-78).

The “parallel worlds” model of counterfactuals requires us to reason as if the parallel worlds are real, while the “branching worlds” theory allows us to treat them merely as thought experiments. Hawthorn sums up the issues well:

Real other worlds of the same sort as ours, it seems safe to say, do not exist. But even if they did, and were to fix our model statements in the way that Lewis [1973] suggests, they would not help us to decide what it is that we want to decide, which are counterfactual claims for this world. We cannot sidestep the workings of the one world we are interested in by pointing to others, where the workings may or may not be different, or transpose the agents of this world into their counterparts elsewhere, and there make them reason and act in any way we will. If we do, we sidestep the problem itself ... An explanation, as I said, is an answer to the question “why?”. It tells a story which is guided by contrasts with what we want to explain. (Hawthorn 1991: 24-25)

We perhaps do not need to resolve two centuries of debates on possible worlds before we can begin talking about the Athenian Empire; as Weber noted, when logicians focus on the problems of historians the results can be “so far risen over the heads of the latter that it is often difficult for the specialist disciplines to recognize themselves with the naked eye in these discussions” (Weber 1949: 114). We can make two important theoretical points: (i) all causal statements imply counterfactuals; (ii) counterfactual thought experiments rest on a coherent philosophical base, in the idea of branching worlds.

In addition to these theoretical points, there are two important methodological points. The first is that if historians have long been talking counterfactually without knowing it, we should now start making these arguments explicit, and evaluating them. This raises the second point: we need methods for evaluating things that did not happen so that we can understand better the things that really did happen.

Social-science historians have been discussing counterfactuals for a century, and have reached agreement on a number of methodological points (see Weber 1949 [1905]: 164-88; Fogel 1964; Elster 1978; Hawthorn 1991; Fearon 1991; Tetlock and Belkin 1996b; Ferguson 1997). Tetlock and Belkin suggest that counterfactual arguments must fulfill six criteria:

1. *Clarity*: Specify and circumscribe the independent and dependent variables (the hypothesizes antecedent and consequent);
2. *Logical consistency or cotenability*: Specify connecting principles that link the antecedent with the consequent and that are cotenable with each other and with the antecedent;
3. *Historical consistency (minimal-rewrite rule)*: Specify antecedents that require altering as few “well-established” historical facts as possible;
4. *Theoretical consistency*: Articulate connecting principles that are consistent with “well-established” theoretical generalizations relevant to the hypothesized antecedent-consequent link;
5. *Statistical consistency*: Articulate connecting principles that are consistent with “well-established” statistical generalizations relevant to the hypothesized antecedent-consequent link;
6. *Projectability*: Tease out testable implications of the connecting principles and determine whether those hypotheses are consistent with additional real-world observations. (Tetlock and Belkin 1996a: 18)

To these, Fearon (1996: 66) adds a seventh “*proximity criterion* ... Consider only thought experiments in which the hypothetical antecedent and consequent are close together in time and are separated by a small number of causal steps.”

These rules are self-evidently sensible, although their relevance varies somewhat according to the type of counterfactual argument we wish to make. Tetlock and Belkin define five ideal types:

1. *Idiographic case-study counterfactuals* that highlight points of indeterminacy at particular junctures in history (reminding us of how things could easily have worked

out differently and of how difficult it is to apply abstract hypothetico-deductive laws to concrete cases);

2. *Nomothetic counterfactuals* that apply well-defined theoretical or empirical generalizations to well-defined antecedent conditions (reminding us that deterministic laws may have been at work that were invisible to the original historical actors as well as to contemporary scholars who insist on a radically idiographic focus on the particular);

3. *Joint idiographic-nomothetic counterfactuals* that combine the historian's interest in what was possible in particular cases with the theorist's interest in identifying lawful regularities across cases, thereby producing theory-informed history;

4. *Computer-simulation counterfactuals* that reveal hitherto latent logical contradictions and gaps in formal theoretical arguments by rerunning "history" in artificial worlds that "capture" key functional properties of the actual world;

5. *Mental-simulation counterfactuals* that reveal hitherto latent psychological contradictions and gaps in belief systems by encouraging people to imagine possible worlds in which causes they supposed irrelevant seem to make a difference, or possible worlds in which causes they supposed consequential seems to be irrelevant. (Tetlock and Belkin 1996a: 6-7)

Most counterfactual arguments overlap several of these categories, but fall chiefly into just one. My arguments about the Athenian Empire are an idiographic case-study, using some elements of the joint idiographic-nomothetic and the mental-simulation approaches. Consequently, the first three of Tetlock and Belkin's criteria for assessment are particularly relevant; numbers four and five less so; and projectability less so still. In the rest of this section, I set out some preliminary remarks on the issues raised by the first three criteria in the context of making counterfactual arguments in ancient history.

First, the problem of specification (see particularly Fogel 1967). It is not enough to ask ourselves whether the Aegean would have developed in the ways that it did had the Athenian Empire not existed. We need to specify as precisely as we can just what aspects of the real world our counterfactual model changes in order to expose the causal logic of what actually happened. If the Persians had won in 490 or 480, the Aegean might have looked quite different in 404 from the way it really did look. Figuring out what would be different and what would be the same would tell us a certain amount about which of the changes that really took place should be laid at the door of the Athenian Empire, and which belong to broader processes. If, on the other hand, our comparison is with a world in which the Persian Wars turned out exactly as they did, but Sparta managed/chose to keep control of the alliance in 478/7, that 404 might look different from both the real one and the fictional one in which Persia conquered Greece. We would learn different things from the two comparisons. Useful counterfactuals depend on being as explicit as possible about the initial conditions of the thought experiment, rather than simply spinning stories about might-have-beens.

Second, there is an infinite number of counterfactuals that we might imagine. We could have Sparta stay in control, but also have Pausanias succeed in taking over Byzantium. Or have Themistocles manage things better and stay in Athens (perhaps even seizing power as a tyrant). Or we could have the Persians succeed in hanging onto their bases in the North Aegean. The possibilities are limited only by our imaginations.

Ferguson therefore stresses that “from the historian’s point of view it is ... important to decide *which* counterfactual questions to pose in the first place ... there is no real point in asking most of the possible counterfactual questions” (1997: 83). To be useful, a counterfactual must be plausible: “*arguments about the relative importance of possible causes become arguments about the relative plausibility of different counterfactual scenarios*” (Fearon 1991: 178). Thus, for example, there would be no point trying to assess the impact that the Athenian Empire had on the development of Greek society by assuming that had the Empire not formed in 478/7, the alternative outcome would have been that all the Greeks would join together with the Persians to form a cooperative union that would conquer the whole Mediterranean. This is simply not plausible. However, worlds in which Sparta tried to maintain control, or the Ionians emigrated to the Greek mainland, or the anti-Persian alliance broke down, are *prima facie* perfectly plausible, and comparing what really happened with them can be a useful way to understand that reality.

The third issue therefore has to be how we assess the plausibility of counterfactuals. Ferguson suggests that “We should consider as plausible or probable *only those alternatives which we can show on the basis of contemporary evidence that contemporaries actually considered*” (1997: 86). No ancient source ever suggests that anyone considered the Greek-Persian union I made up in the last paragraph, while the other three outcomes I mentioned do all come up in our sources. We can therefore disregard the first story-line, and explore the other three. Ferguson’s rule is an excellent starting-point, but ancient historians will often be hard-pressed to follow it to the letter. In his monumental study of the First World War, Ferguson (1998) shows the importance of distinguishing between what was actually said and considered in the British Cabinet in July-August 1914 from what participants and observers said had been said and considered just a matter of months later. In fifth-century Greece we have few sources of this quality. Thucydides was still revising his text after 404, and much depends on how we interpret his notorious claim to have his speakers say *ta deonta*, “the necessary things” (1.22). We often depend on what Xenophon wrote in his retirement, what Diodorus made of things in the first century BC, and even what Plutarch thought about the Athenian Empire half a millennium after the Peloponnesian War. We have to relax Ferguson’s constraint, which creates serious problems; but not, I argue, insuperable ones.

Fourth, the most glaring question of all: how do we actually do counterfactual analysis? We will be arguing about things which, by definition, did not happen. Fearon suggests that

support for a causal hypothesis in the counterfactual strategy comes from *arguments* about what would have happened. These arguments are made credible (1) by invoking general principles, theories, laws, or regularities distinct from the hypothesis being tested; and (2) by drawing on knowledge of historical facts relevant to a counterfactual scenario. (Fearon 1991: 176)

The key word here is *arguments*. There is no way to verify a counterfactual empirically: “counterfactuals cannot be true or false, only assertible or non-assertible” (Elster 1983: 37). In a widely read critique of counterfactual analysis, David Hackett Fisher argued that because of this, “The results [of counterfactual history] are not merely false but absurd,

for to quantify the conditional is to square the circle. It is simply impossible for a singular statement to be *both* counterfactual and factual at the same time” (Fisher 1970: 16). But to say this is to misunderstand the issues. Fearon, more reasonably, concludes that “the counterfactual strategy for ‘empirically’ checking a causal hypothesis seems only indirectly empirical, since the confirmation it provides depends principally on other *theories*, which are presumably themselves supported by empirical evidence from actual case comparisons” (Fearon 1991: 177). The historian needs to make as clear as possible the assumptions he or she brings to the construction of counterfactuals, how they connect with empirical data, and their theory-ladenness. This is only a problem if we assume (like Fisher) that the data that historians deploy in conventional narrative explanation are *not* theory-laden. With counterfactual argument, we are merely making the theorized nature of empirical testing more explicit: like it or not, historians have been talking theoretically all along, as well as counterfactually.

This was already clear to Weber a century ago. Evaluating Meyer’s claim that the battle of Marathon was a turning point in world history because it caused the triumph of Greek secularism not Persian mysticism, he insisted that Meyer needed to show that

certain elements of the historically given situation were objectively present; that is, their presence was such as can now be ascertained with objective validity, and that they were, when we imagine the battle of Marathon as not having happened or as having happened differently (including, naturally, a host of other components of the actual course of events), “capable” according to *general empirical rules*, of producing such a theocratic-religious development. (Weber 1949 [1905]: 174)

That is, to justify his claim that Marathon had this effect, Meyer really needed to build a counterfactual model showing that given facts that we can ascertain about Greece in 490 BC, a Persian victory would have led to Zoroastrian theocracy displacing the styles of intellectual life that actually developed. Needless to say, Meyer did not do this.

The challenge for historians wishing to justify causal arguments is to develop general empirical rules for thinking through counterfactuals. The obvious way to proceed is to combine thought experiments with comparative cases. In fifth-century Greece, this means comparing the changes in the Aegean between 478 and 404 with those taking place in parts of Greece where there was no imperial power, and also with those regions where some other city (Syracuse, Sparta, etc.) was extending state power. The difficulties of this are readily apparent: as Oakeshott would insist, the vast, seamless web of historical details varied wildly between different parts of the Greek world. On the one hand, we cannot easily make *ceteris paribus* assumptions; on the other, we do not have the mass of well documented cases that sometimes allows social scientists to evade the particularity of individual cases by making large-N cross-country statistical comparisons. The best way to proceed, I suggest, is by (i) making comparisons with actual cases whenever possible, (ii) setting out assumptions explicitly, and (iii) pursuing detail-oriented narratives of the specific cases with just as much rigor as traditional ancient historians (cf. David Laitin’s [forthcoming] discussion of the “tripartite methodology” of comparative politics).

Weber concluded his essay by saying that “an objective judgment of possibility regarding what ‘would’ have happened according to the general empirical rules, when a

causal component is conceived as excluded or as modified, is often highly uncertain and often cannot be arrived at at all,” and recognizing that there is normally no way to quantify competing objective possibilities (1949: 175, 182). Fearon’s proximity criterion lets us be more specific about this. The more narrowly focused our counterfactuals, the better we can assess competing possibilities. Ferguson, for instance, accepts the consensus that once Germany mobilized in 1914, a general continental war was inevitable. He suggests that the most interesting question is not why that war broke out when it did, but why it became a global war, and he identifies Britain’s decision to enter as the key to that problem. He argues that Britain decided to support France not because of militaristic ideologies, fear of Germany, newspaper campaigns, or even treaty obligations to Belgium, but because Sir Edward Grey’s policy was so ambiguous, and because of the specific things that individual politicians said and did (Ferguson 1998: 1-211). While he sticks to the events of early August, working through counterfactual scenarios such as the cabinet standing its ground against Grey, leading almost certainly to Churchill’s defection, the fall of the Liberal government, and Britain entering the war but slightly later and under very different circumstances, his arguments are compelling. They rest on detailed use of rich sources, knowledge of the workings of British politics, and plausible assumptions about the actors’ bounded rationality. But when he moves out to broader counterfactuals—that had Britain not fought, Germany would have won and would have created a kind of European Union not dissimilar to that which existed by the 1990s, while leaving the British Empire intact (Ferguson 1998: 168-73, 457-62)—he pushes proximity criterion hard. This raises problems of what Nelson Goodman (1983 [1947]: 15-17) called “cotenability,” and what some social scientists call “second-order counterfactuals.” If we change one variable, general empirical rules require us to recognize that other variables would also change in ways that potentially confound our thought experiment. Ferguson may be right that German war aims before August 1914 were relatively modest, and only escalated to include occupation of the Belgian Channel ports in response to Britain’s entry into the war. But there is no way to know whether an easy victory over France in autumn 1914 might not have led the Kaiser to escalate his goals regardless.

The classic example of this is Robert Fogel’s counterfactual test of the thesis that railroads drove economic growth in nineteenth-century America. Fogel recognized that

to establish the proposition that railroads substantially altered the course of economic growth, one must do more than provide information on the services of railroads. It must also be shown that substitutes for railroads could not (or would not) have performed essentially the same role. (Fogel 1964: 207)

Consequently, he not only built a quantitative model showing that had railroads never been invented, things would in fact have turned out much the same way, but also argued that without railroads, people would have put more energy into extending canals, building warehouses to store meat during periods the canals were frozen, improving roads, and perhaps even developing the internal combustion engine more quickly than in reality (Fogel 1964, with David 1969; Elster 1978: 204-208). As I move from assessing the changes wrought by the Athenian Empire, to asking whether it could have succeeded in breaking through to the scale of the Assyrian, Persian, and Roman empires, and then to

asking what difference its failure to break through made to the course of world history, I necessarily create increasing proximity and cotenability problems. All kinds of second-order counterfactuals come into play. If Athens had taken Syracuse in 415, would Carthage still have invaded Sicily, starting a war just as draining as that which really happened, and effectively canceling out Athens' success? If the Athenians had defeated not only Sparta but also Persia, would they in the process have turned their state into something not so different from the Hellenistic monarchies that really came into being in the third century? Was the only way to become a Mediterranean empire to relax the constraints on citizenship in the way that the Romans did?

There are limits to what a counterfactual approach can do for us, and there are plenty of good questions to which it contributes little. But since the things I want to know about the Athenian Empire require me to make counterfactual assumptions, I may as well recognize this, and make them explicit. By doing so, I suggest, I can not only raise the questions I set out at the beginning of this paper but even come up with some quite convincing answers.

#### **4. Key concepts**

##### *4.1. Archê, empire, and state*

In answering my first question, about the changes that the Athenian Empire wrought in Greek society, I emphasize the process of state-formation. In doing this, I find it useful to distinguish between states and empires, turning to the latter category in sections 7 and 8. Greek historians often try to identify the moment when the Delian League turned into the Athenian Empire, but in contrasting state-formation and imperialism, I have something very different in mind. To avoid confusion, I therefore need to define my terms.

I begin, as classicists sensibly tend to do, with Thucydides' terminology. He normally calls the political unit led by Athens an *archê*, literally "rule." He seems to have carefully distinguished between *archê* and *hêgemonia*, "hegemony," which denoted a looser form of alliance or control (Wickersham 1994: 31-34). At 1.97 he described the fairly consensual anti-Persian alliance of 478 as *hêgemonia*, and Athens' unpopular control in 431 as *archê*. He said that *archê* was based on overwhelming *dynamis*, or "power" (1.99), and that those over whom the Athenians wielded their *archê* could be said to be enslaved (1.98).

Historians normally translate *archê* as "empire," but despite the care of their philological analysis of Thucydides' Greek, they have given little attention to specifying what "empire" itself means. For example, not once in his 620-page classic *The Athenian Empire* (1972) did Meiggs say what he thought an empire was. But this hardly made Meiggs unusual among classical historians. In the introduction to a collection of essays on *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, Peter Garnsey and Dick Whittaker (1978a) noted that most of the contributors shied away from defining "empire" or "imperialism." Garnsey and Whittaker suggested that the contributors' largely implicit models broke down into two types. They called these definitions "restricted" (i.e., very historically specific, and grounded in the actors' own terminology) and "abstract" (i.e., drawing on general, cross-culturally valid models of "empire"). In the chapter in that book looking at the Athenian Empire, Moses Finley (1978a: 104) quite rightly noted that the former practice "give[s] excessive weight to purely formal considerations, which, if adopted rigorously, would fragment the category 'empire' so much as to render it empty and

useless,” ruling out the possibility of comparative analysis. For example, some historians feel that “empire” is too strong a word for what the Athenians created, presumably (although this is rarely spelled out) because they are making implicit comparisons with other imperial systems, and finding the Athenian *archê* wanting in some crucial respect(s). Rather than specifying an analytical framework that would be appropriate to the particular case of Athens but would also clarify the kind of comparisons that presumably underlie their unease with the word “empire,” some classicists have suggested that (despite Thucydides’ usage) we should translate *archê* as “hegemony,” or else refuse to translate the Greek at all, speaking only of *archê* or *symmachia* (e.g., Kolbe 1938; Schäfer 1939). Wolfgang Schuller (1974: 2-3) made a more promising start by beginning his study of the Athenian Empire with Weber’s distinction between *direkte* and *indirekte Herrschaft*. But instead of going on to make this the basis for a typology of forms of *Herrschaft* that could be used to clarify what kind of organization the Athenians created and its significance for Greek history, Schuller used Weber’s categories to redescribe Thucydides’ diachronic *hêgemonia-archê* development: Athens began with *indirekte Herrschaft*, then moved toward *direkte Herrschaft*.

Finley suggested that we should begin instead by recognizing 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). If we limit the definition of empire to a philological exercise, with the central question being whether we translate *archê* as “hegemony,” “empire,” or *direkte Herrschaft*, or—worse still—just transliterate it without attempting a translation, we are ducking the analytical challenge.

We are therefore forced to look outside classicists’ analyses of the Athenian Empire itself for useful tools. Let us begin by taking Michael Doyle’s suggestion in his influential book *Empires* 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 emphasizes political boundaries: an 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).

Contrast Doyle’s definition of an empire with Michael Mann’s summary of the elements of a Weberian definition of the state 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 should immediately note major overlaps between Doyle's empire and Mann's state: 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)

Borrowing one of Finley's favorite analytical tools, I suggest that we envision a spectrum of territorially extensive coercion-wielding organizations. At one end are empires; at the other, states. The empire end of the spectrum would be characterized by a strong sense of foreignness between rulers and ruled. In the extreme case, all of the population in all regions incorporated in the empire would consider themselves to be ethnically distinct, belonging "naturally" to autonomous political units. The nineteenth-century Ottoman and early twentieth-century Austro-Hungarian Empires might be good examples. On the whole, the more recently the territorially extensive organization has been created, the stronger this sense will be, and the closer the organization will stand to the empire end of the spectrum. With the passage of time, and with institutional and cultural change, the sense of difference might decline, and the "empire" will move toward the "state" end of the spectrum. Most of today's well established, legitimate nation-states were at one point much nearer to the empire end of the spectrum, and over time moved toward statehood. The state can be thought of as an imagined community (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1990). In a case like France, united for the best part of a millennium, there is so much consensus around Frenchness and the idea of the state that a separation of regions is unthinkable; while the former Soviet Union, created in 1917 on the ruins of the Russian Empire, and Yugoslavia, manufactured in 1919 out of peoples who had until recently been subjects of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, arguably never moved far from the imperial end of the spectrum.

Until the fifth century, it is debatable whether Athens was even on this spectrum. We might see its history from the tenth century through the fourth largely as one of the efforts of some men to create and monopolize offices through which they could command the obedience and resources of others, and the efforts of those others to resist this process. Overall, the would-be rulers did not do very well: classical democracy was a kind of compromise between the need to have state institutions and the desire to prevent anyone from capturing control of them. The Assembly and lawcourts were the scenes of endless negotiations over these conflicting principles (Ober 1989). The evolutionary story most relevant to classical Athens is not about the development from state to empire, but about the development from a very small and loose form of state—not so different from what Gary Runciman (1989: 152-53) calls a proto-state—to a larger and more centralized

one. The fifth-century Athenian “Empire” was not moving from the state end of the spectrum toward the empire end; it was struggling to get onto the spectrum in the first place. Any significant moves toward being an empire were generations away, and were permanently cut off in 404 BC. State-formation, the process of expanding central power, was the most important process happening in the fifth-century Aegean.

Doyle’s international-relations approach, focusing on the “imperial” end of this spectrum, can be useful for thinking about some aspects of the Athenian Empire. But Thucydides himself 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 in the late fifth century. Either way, some Athenians saw 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 this was how he was thinking about the Athenian *archê*—in terms quite similar to Mann’s definition of statehood.

#### 4.2. *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 entering into its paradigmatic 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 socioeconomic complexity. Anthony Snodgrass’ *Archaeology and the Rise of the Greek State* (1977) was the crucial contribution to this line of thought. From this perspective, “state-formation” tends to be seen as a discrete moment of transition (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 new level of complexity, usually in the eighth century, rather than as an ongoing process.

Classical scholars have not paid much attention to more recent social-scientific discussions of the best ways to think about states (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)

In the 1990s some archaeologists have raised doubts about the importance of eighth-century state-formation, and even about the analytical usefulness of the state (e.g., S. Morris 1992; de Polignac 1995). My comments here should not be seen as supporting this position: 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. That said, though, although the city-states of the eighth through sixth centuries were more powerful than the communities of the preceding “Dark Age,” and despite their remarkable cultural achievements, in comparative terms they remained strikingly 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. Most of the state’s tiny income was normally spent on cult (generally, see Snodgrass 1980: 123-60; Andreades 1933). Even war was cheap, since the wealthier citizens who made up the hoplite phalanx supplied their own arms and armor, and a single battle in the agricultural off-season settled most campaigns (Hanson 1989). State navies only became a significant factor after 550 (Wallinga 1993), and there was a quantum leap in the costs of war in the early fifth century. Athens, Syracuse, and a few other cities 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 transition, and to think of it historically.

#### 4.3. *Forms of the state in Greece*

Archaic and classical city-states were peculiar places. There was tremendous variety (see Gehrke 1986), but also a general tendency around the shores of the Aegean to form small communities of legally 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 had fewer than 10,000 residents, and many were just large villages. 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 percent of a region's arable land (Morris 2000: 141-42).

Down to 500 BC poleis were normally 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; 1998b; 2000) I traced these developments by combining archaeology and texts, 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 4.2). 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 4.2 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 4.2 has no room for the free citizens who 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.

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 4.2. Further, Athens actively promoted democratic structures in other poleis in the fifth century. But when we take a broader geographical perspective, we see that the Athenian *archê*—which indirectly paid for much of the strengthening of Athenian democracy—was gradually converting the Aegean *as a whole* into something very like Figure 4.2. The Athenians were remaking 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 armed force. Fixed, annual contributions from each city—basically the same thing as taxes—paid for the armed forces. Athenian administrators collected these payments and intervened on a regular basis in local politics. They judged many of the most important lawsuits in 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 Athenians interested in extracting taxes, maintaining the peace, and defending themselves.

By 421, the Aegean looked something like Figure 4.2. Had Athens avoided collapse in 404, I argue below, this process of state-formation would have continued. This, I suggest, is one of the most important changes that the Athenian Empire wrought on the Greek world. The second major change is that—as Thucydides insists (1.23)—the growth of Athenian power was significant not just as a fact in its own right, but because it also generated fear in other city-states, and forced them either to submit, accelerating the process, or to react, accelerating a process of secondary state-formation.

## **5. Basic parameters**

### *5.1. Natural environment and ecology*

We normally class Greece as part of the “Mediterranean” climate zone, with hot dry summers and cool wet winters, but there is much variation within this category. Northwest Greece is mountainous and forested, with some fertile upland valleys, while southern Greece is far drier, with small plains divided by hills and some significant mountains. Thessaly and Macedonia have much larger and better-watered plains. The “Mediterranean triad” of cereals, vines, and olives was established by the third millennium BC, although olives will not grow above 800 meters altitude, making oil an imported item in the mountains. Some historians would add pulses to the triad as a staple food. Meat was a luxury, particularly beef, although sheep and goat were certainly eaten in the frequent religious festivals. Fish too were considered delicacies. They were not available in sufficient numbers to constitute a staple food, but even in small amounts could be an important protein source. Overall, the diet was healthy and serious famines were quite rare, but skeletal and textual evidence alike suggest that periodic food shortages were common throughout antiquity (generally, see Garnsey 1999).

Age-specific height is strongly genetically controlled, but historical studies have repeatedly shown that long-term trends correlate tightly with nutritional status, and that height is an excellent predictor of standards of living (Floud et al. 1990; Steckel 1999). Estimates derived from the long bones of classical Greek skeletons using Trotter and Gleser's (1958) regression formula indicate relatively well fed populations, by pre-industrial standards. In a pioneering study of stature, morbidity, and economic growth, Robert Fogel (1993: 14) suggested using 168.0 cm as the upper limit for speaking of "short," i.e., poorly nourished, men. The Greek data fall right around this figure. Table 4.1 shows the data for the best analyzed cemeteries. Table 4.2(a) shows these average heights in terms of percentiles for the contemporary US population. Ancient Greeks were poorly nourished by these standards, but Table 4.2(b) shows that they fare much better when compared with Greek figures from just forty years ago; and the men buried at Metapontum and the Kerameikos were typically taller than Cypriot Greek military recruits in 1949, who averaged just 165.1 cm (Angel 1972).

Greek agriculture was almost entirely rain-fed, and the major challenge facing Greek farmers was less the overall shortage of rain than its unpredictability. Interannual variation in rainfall was high, requiring farmers to develop storage, friendship, and exchange as risk-buffering mechanisms. Given that barley is much more drought-resistant than wheat, it is likely that barley-bread was the staple food. Between 1931 and 1960, rainfall around Athens varied so much that the barley crop failed one year in twenty, wheat one year in four, and legumes three years in four, and there are good reasons to think that these statistics are broadly applicable to classical antiquity (Garnsey 1988: 8-16). Yields rarely exceeded 650 kg per hectare (Sallares 1991: 372-89; Garnsey 1992).

## 5.2. *Demography*

Population was increasing rapidly in the fifth century. In the two centuries following the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces around 1200 BC, population fell by 75 percent in some areas, and then stagnated through the tenth and ninth centuries. A recent palynological study of the Pylos area concludes that "During the Early Iron Age [1100-700 BC] the landscape experienced the least intensive human impact of the last 4,000 years" (Zangger et al. 1997: 593). Rapid recovery began in the eighth century: growth may have been as high as 1 percent per annum in regions around the shores of the Aegean. Estimates based on recent data from systematic, intensive archaeological surface surveys suggest that between 800 and 400 BC population may have increased ten-fold (Table 4.3). Survey data have many problems, and population estimates based on them always require broad margins of error (Sbonias 1999); but the problems affecting the classical period seem to be smaller than those for prehistoric periods (Bintliff et al. 1999), and in this case, the evidence is overwhelming. On the whole, growth in the seventh through fifth centuries was fastest in the Aegean areas; in the fourth century, northern Greece caught up, and in the third, western regions (Corvisier 1991; Bintliff 1997).

Infants and children are generally under-represented in the archaeological record, but in a number of cemeteries—including the fifth-century Kerameikos burial ground at Athens—infant mortality was high, as we would expect in a pre-demographic transition society. From a sample of 425 skeletons, Lawrence Angel (Bisel and Angel 1985: table 4) concluded that the average adult age at death for women rose from 30.9 years in the

Early Iron Age (1100-700 BC) to 36.8 in classical times (c. 480-323 BC). However, physical anthropologists are now more skeptical about being able to age adult skeletons accurately than they were when Angel compiled his data (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). Sevasti Triantaphyllou (1998), studying Early Iron Age Pydna, and Maciej and Renata Henneberg (1998), studying classical Metapontum, limited themselves to ten-year wide bands for adults. Further, the most recent studies seem to be producing younger adult ages at death for women. Sara Biesel (1990) estimated just 31.2 years for the fourth-century Kerameikos, while Henneberg and Henneberg (1998: 510) calculate 38 years for Metapontum. But the mean figure for adult women's age at death in the Early Iron Age taking the mid-points of Triantaphyllou's categories was just 26.3 years, preserving the gap between average adult ages at death in the Early Iron Age and classical periods noted by Angel. Problems abound: the data from different parts of Greece may not be comparable, and inter-observer error is a perennial difficulty. But the limited data do seem to support Angel's general conclusion. The typical woman's reproductive life was at least five years (or 15-20 percent) longer in the fifth century than it had been in the tenth or ninth.

Comparative demography suggests that population change is normally mortality-led (e.g., Livi-Bacci 1997). Exogenous factors, directly linked to disease patterns and perhaps ultimately to climate (Galloway 1986), affect infant mortality and, if female adult age at death increases within the years of fertility, total fertility rates increase. With more children being born and more of those born surviving to adulthood, population grows until people respond by artificially controlling their fertility, emigrating, or starving. If disease rates increase, the reverse happens. Since it can take some time for people to recognize changes in mortality and to recalculate the relationship between the private and social costs of children, periods of rapid growth or decline can occur. Both population growth and decline tend to disrupt pre-modern states massively (Goldstone 1991: 27-37). In ancient Greece, periods of population growth correlate strongly with economic growth and state-formation, while demographic decline correlates with economic and state collapse.

The interrelation of disease and demography has barely been studied in classical antiquity (see Scheidel 2001; forthcoming), although the literary sources for epidemics are well known (Grmek 1989; Horstmanshoff 1989). The best known example is the plague that broke out at Athens in 430 (Thucydides 2.47-54), which, like most early modern plagues, seems to have come from the east. The plague recurred in 427/6 (Thucydides 3.27), but since Aegean population as a whole continued to climb for another century, we should probably conclude that this had little immediate effect on the local disease pool. However, Diodorus (13.114; 14.63, 70-71) says that terrible plagues broke out in the Carthaginian army in Sicily in 405 and 396. He does not speak of these plagues affecting the Greeks, but they may well have been connected to the Sicilian population decline that reached crisis proportions by the 340s.

The textual evidence for absolute population sizes is much disputed. Karl Julius Beloch (1886) collected the relevant data long ago. My co-editor (Scheidel 2001: 49 n. 195) has likened attempts to calculate manpower from figures for army sizes to the ways that Tolkien buffs have worked out the populations of Elves and Orcs in Middle Earth, but this is unduly harsh. Despite 115 years of critiques, many of Beloch's conclusions seem likely to be fairly accurate. Mogens Hansen (1985) has argued that the population

of Attica—the roughly 2500 km<sup>2</sup> of territory comprising the city-state of Athens—peaked at around 350,000 in the 430s. This was a huge population for a polis. Most of the 1000+ known city-states had a population of just a few thousands, or in some cases even a few hundreds.

About 40,000 of the 350,000 residents in Attica were adult male citizens. Judging from the settled area of the city of Athens, about 10 percent of the population lived in the urban center, and perhaps another 5 percent in the harbor town of Piraeus. Hansen's figures would mean a density of 139 people per km<sup>2</sup> in Attica, while the carrying capacity was in the region of 35-42 people per km<sup>2</sup> (Garnsey 1988: 90; Sallares 1991: 72). Even in the best years for rainfall, Attica would have needed to import between two-thirds and three-quarters of its food. Hence the strategic importance of Athens' defeat at Aegospotamoi; absent a powerful Athenian fleet, Sparta could simply cut off the grain supply and starve the city into submission. The war caused serious population losses, especially among the poorer men who rowed in the fleet (Strauss 1986: 70-86). At the lowest point in the fourth century, there were probably 30,000 citizens and a total population of about 250,000 (Hansen 1985). Athens' population was about 30 percent lower in the 350s than in the 430s, and probably fell lower still the early fourth century, while surveys suggest that in other parts of Greece population was often 10 to 20 percent higher in the fourth century than in the fifth. The Peloponnesian War was a demographic disaster for Athens.

Athens' main rival for populousness in the fifth century was Syracuse. Thucydides (7.28) says Syracuse was no smaller than Athens in 413. Syracuse's fifth-century walls encircled 120 hectares, but as early as the 470s settlement had spread beyond them (Finley 1979: 52), and the population probably was much the same size as Athens'. Beloch (1886: 281) estimated the population of Syracusan territory at 250,000 in 415, a density of 53-75/km<sup>2</sup>—lower than Attica's, but still high by pre-industrial standards. De Angelis (2000) estimates that twice as much land in Greek Sicily was arable than in mainland Greece (perhaps 77 percent, as compared to Garnsey's [1988: 92] estimate of 35-40 percent for Attica). At least half a dozen Sicilian states probably had fifth-century populations of 40,000-50,000 (Muggia 1997; De Angelis 2000).

The historical geographer Norman Pounds (1990: 34) estimated the total population of the Greek world c. 431 BC at around 1.5 million. He accepted Gomme's (1933) estimate of 350,000 for the population of Attica, and suggested that tribute-payment was based on population size, at a rate of roughly one talent per 750 people (Pounds 1973: 60). This would give a total population for Athens and the Empire of something like 750,000. He calculated that there were probably 500,000 Greeks in Sicily and southern Italy, leaving just 250,000 in the rest of the Greek mainland. His estimates were much lower than Beloch's (in the case of Chalcidice, Beloch [1886: 506] estimated 100,000 people, and Pounds [1969] just 50,000; while De Angelis [2000: 139] estimates 600,000 for Sicily alone, and Gallo [1989] also leans toward a high figure). Further, Pounds' assumption that tribute was based on population was clearly wrong (Nixon and Price 1990). The estimates for Sparta mentioned below and the intensive surface surveys discussed in the next section are more consistent with Beloch's guesses than Pounds'. I have not yet worked through the issues in detail, but I suspect that on the eve of the Peloponnesian War the total population of the Greek world (stretching from Sicily to Asia Minor, with a few further-flung outposts) was at least three million. Attica

accounted for more than 10 percent of this figure, and the Athenian Empire as a whole for maybe 30 percent. A century later, there were probably something like 3.5 million Greeks (including slaves, metics, and other people who would not have identified as ethnic Greeks but who lived in the areas where ethnic Greeks predominated), about 7 percent of them in Attica. Syracusans may have made up about 8 percent of all Greeks in both the fifth and fourth centuries, and Sicilian Greeks about 20 percent in the fifth, and rather less in the fourth.

Sparta's demographic situation was very different. Paul Cartledge (1987: 174) estimates the population of unfree helots in the fifth century at 175,000-200,000, and Stephen Hodkinson (2000: 134-35) puts the number at 162,000-187,000. Both believe that the helot population was increasing in size through the archaic and classical periods. But because of its peculiar citizenship rules, the population of full Spartiates fell steadily. There were about 8000 in 480, but only 2400-4200 in 418 (Hodkinson 2000: 421), fewer than a thousand in the mid fourth century (Aristotle, *Politics* 1270a29-31), and no more than 700 in the 240s (Plutarch, *Agis* 5). Attempts to broaden the citizen body in the 230s-220s and again in 207 created revolutionary ferments that triggered violent repression by Macedon and finally Rome. The resident population of Laconia may have stood around 5 percent of the total population of the Greek world in the 430s, but by the 360s Sparta was incapable of providing military leadership.

### 5.3. *Economic structures*

During the Dark Age, probably 80-90 percent of all production was consumed by the primary producers or exchanged over relatively short distances to even out the effects of inter-annual variability in rainfall. The small residue went to support a not particularly wealthy elite and to small-scale commodity production (Morris, in prep.). Even in the fourth century, we must agree with Paul Cartledge that "The ancient Greek world was massively and unalterably rural" (Cartledge 1998: 6); but the proportion of household production mobilized for exchange nevertheless grew enormously between the eighth century and the fourth. The fourth-century Athenian literary sources give the impression that any occupation other than being a farmer, a politician, or a warrior was frowned upon, but Edward Cohen (1992) has emphasized the way that speakers tried to avoid mentioning what they called the "invisible economy" of banking, finance, and the market. To have generated the kind of incomes that we know that the Athenian aristocracy had, this sector of the economy must have been substantial. By one recent estimate, nearly one-third of fourth-century Athens' income must have been in the form of gains from trade (Jew 1999).

The emergence of large urban markets for food, metals, building, etc., like Athens and Syracuse, and of organized marketplaces like the Piraeus to supply them (see p. 000 below), speeded up the circulation of goods. Some regions of the Greek world had clear comparative advantages in production: we hear about Athenian silver, olive oil, and fine pottery, Thasian wine, Thessalian and Sicilian grain, Cycladic marble, and Macedonian timber, to name but a few. Coinage was introduced to Greece around 600 BC, and small change was in use before 500 (Kim, forthcoming), lowering transaction costs (see also p. 000 below).

Surface surveys have detected a partial but important shift in settlement patterns all over Greece in the fifth and particularly the fourth centuries. Prior to 500, probably

90-95 percent of the population lived in villages of no more than a few hundred inhabitants. Each region would normally have a handful of towns of 1000 or 2000 people, and Athens, Corinth, Argos, and Knossos may have had more than 5000 (but fewer than 10,000) inhabitants. But after 500, increasing numbers of Greeks started living in rural farmsteads (see Alcock 1993: 33-49 for a summary of surveys; add Lohmann 1993; Jameson et al. 1994; Wells 1996; Davis et al. 1997; Mee and Forbes 1997). In the southern Argolid, the ratio of third-order (probably farmstead) sites to second-order (village) sites rose from three to one in the archaic period to six to one in the classical (c. 500-350 BC), and ten to one in late classical/early hellenistic (c. 350-250 BC; Jameson et al. 1994: 383).

The shifts were partial. On Kea, Cherry et al. (1991: 337) estimate that even at the height of dispersion, three-quarters of the population lived in the main town (population 900-1200). But even a shift of residence by 10-15 percent of the population could have had massive economic effects. A “new model” of classical agriculture has taken shape, seeing farmers as working contiguous fields, pasturing animals on them, and using manure to reduce fallow (Burford [1993: 000] presents the arguments in an even-handed manner). Bintliff and Snodgrass (1988) interpret the “haloes” of classical sherds found around Boeotian towns as evidence for more intensive manuring in the fifth and fourth centuries. There has been strong criticism of this argument (Alcock et al. 1994), but new evidence supports the manuring hypothesis (Snodgrass 1994; Ault 1999). Around Pylos, Eberhard Zangger and his colleagues conclude that “The palynological data argue for a dense population and a high level of agricultural production during the Classical/Hellenistic period. Human control of the landscape seems to have reached its maximum at that time” (1997: 594).

Standards of living rose sharply across the archaic and classical periods. I mentioned the evidence for increasing stature and average age at death on p. 000 above. All over Greece, the roofed space in the floor plan of typical house sizes increased from about 55 m<sup>2</sup> in the eighth century to 230 m<sup>2</sup> in the fourth. Since the proportion of houses with second floors also increased, the typical house size probably grew seven or eight-fold. There were similar improvements in the sophistication of house construction, and comparable increases in the scale of domestic assemblages. Classical houses—and particularly those of the fourth century—were generally commodious, comfortable places to live (Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994; Hoepfner 1999; Nevett 1999; Ault, forthcoming; Cahill, forthcoming; Morris, forthcoming). All the evidence indicates that sustained per capita as well as aggregate economic growth was underway in archaic and classical Greece.

#### 5.4. *Technology*

Most Greek technology was fairly basic (Mokyr 1990: 20-30, 193-99; Meijer and van Nijf 1992; and Humphrey et al. 1998 collect the evidence). Paul Halstead (1987) has rightly warned against the dangers of imagining a monolithic “traditional” agricultural regime in premodern Greece, but (except for the introduction of iron around 1100) but in many spheres classical technology was much the same as what had been available a thousand years earlier. So far as we know, agriculture depended entirely on muscle power. New finds are showing that water mills were much more common in the Roman

Empire than had been thought (Greene 2000), but there is no evidence for such machinery in classical Greece.

Science—both theoretical and empirical—was unusually well developed in classical Greece, and was taken much further in Hellenistic times. Medicine also saw major advances, although doctors could do little to change the basic patterns of mortality (Lloyd 1970; 1984). But there were few attempts to apply scientific knowledge or principles systematically to solving problems in the real world. In this, of course, the Greeks were anything but unusual; late seventeenth-century England seems to have been the first place in the world to have developed a culture integrating science with technology (Jacob 1988).

As noted above, house-building improved sharply, particularly from 550 onward; so too hygiene and water supplies. Late sixth-century Athens already had public fountain houses, adequate drainage, and piped water (Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 000). On Samos Eupalinos cut a broad tunnel for a mile through a hill to bring water to the city in the sixth century (Herodotus 3.60), and in the early fifth Phaeax built massive underground stone conduits to drain water away from Syracuse (Diodorus 11.25).

Land transportation was primitive. Roads were not well paved. Herodotus (5.52-53) was amazed by Persia's Royal Road from Susa to Sardis, and moving large objects was particularly slow work (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1673 = Meijer and van Nijf 1992: no. 173). Strabo (5.3.8) explicitly contrasted the high quality of Roman roads with the low standards in Greece. There were a few exceptional feats, such as the construction around 600 BC of the *diolkos*, a road on which ships could be dragged overland across the Isthmus of Corinth (Verdelis 1964; Strabo 8.2.1).

Sea transport was more developed. Shipbuilding improved in the late eighth century, probably influenced by Phoenician innovations, and the first purpose-built merchant vessels were built on Samos, probably in the late sixth century (Plutarch, *Pericles* 26; Casson 1986). Most Greek trading vessels were small, probably about 20 meters long. The stone bases for a ship dedicated in the sanctuary of Hera on Samos around 600 suggest a ship 21.9 meters long and 2.1 meters in the beam (Walter and Vierneisel 1959: 11-13), and a late fifth-century wreck from Porticello in the Straits of Messina was about 17 meters long, with a 30-ton burden (Eiseman and Ridgway 1987). Another wreck of the same date off Alonnisos, though, seems to be at least 25 meters long with a burden of 126 tons, which compares well with many Roman merchantmen (Hadjidaki 1996). Hull construction had changed little since the Bronze Age, and fore-and-aft rigging was unknown. Harbors were crude by later standards (e.g., Strabo 17.1.6-10; Appian, *Punic Wars* 8.14.96; Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.408-414), but sixth-century Samos was again a pioneer (Herodotus 3.60), and the fifth-century Piraeus boasted substantial facilities (Garland 1987). Athens also developed quite sophisticated financial institutions for capital-intensive seaborne trade (e.g., Demosthenes 35.10-11; Isager and Hansen 1975).

The Greeks made some notable advances in military technology. By the seventh century, battles were being decided by phalanxes of heavy infantry (hoplites) in bronze armor. On the right terrain, these were devastatingly effective, and between the mid seventh century and 371, Sparta dominated this form of warfare. Hoplite armies were cheap, with soldiers normally providing their own armor, and normally settled campaigns with a single battle (Hanson 1989). But they moved slowly, were predictable, and were

ineffective against fortifications. Most Greek cities had walls, which in the fifth century were adequate to deter direct assaults; but in the fourth century, both offensive and defensive siege techniques advanced rapidly, bringing great increases in costs (Garlan 1974). Light troops and cavalry were little used in Aegean Greece until the late fifth century, although cavalry were more numerous and important in Sicily.

The most important developments in fifth-century military technology were at sea. Thucydides (1.13) seems to be saying that triremes, fast warships with three decks of oars (Morrison 1986), were invented in the late eighth century, but there is some evidence that they only became common in the late sixth century (Herodotus 1.166; 3.39; Thucydides 1.14; Wallinga 1993). In the fifth century, a trireme cost about a talent to build and rig, and probably about another talent per month to support the crew of 180+ men. This meant a spectacular increase in the costs of warfare, particularly after Athens used a lucky strike of silver to build the first large fleet, of 200 triremes, in 483 (Herodotus 7.144). This completely changed the nature of war and state-formation. Navies could project state power in a way that had been unimaginable in the sixth century. Thucydides (2.62) had Pericles remind the Athenians that “With your navy as it is today there is no power on earth—not the King of Persia nor any people under the sun—that can stop you from sailing where you wish. This power of yours is something in an altogether different category from all the advantages of houses and cultivated land.” Athens struck with impunity in Egypt, Cyprus, the Black Sea, and Sicily, as well as all over the Aegean. As Sparta discovered, the only way to compete with a naval power was to create a similar fleet. But a full summer campaign for the Athenian fleet would cost at least 600 talents, far beyond the revenue of any normal city-state. This was one of the major forces driving more rapid state-formation. In the 390s, Syracuse began using quadriremes and perhaps invented quinqueremes; and by the 294 Demetrius the Besieger was using fifteen- and sixteen-banked ships in battle (Diodorus 14.41-44; Plutarch, *Demetrius* 43).

### 5.5. *Social structures*

The most unusual feature of classical Greek social structures was male citizen egalitarianism. The idea of the polis as a community of equal, local-born men—what I have elsewhere called “the middling ideology”—gained dominance in the eighth century. It was strongly contested across the archaic period, but by 500, this emerged as the only legitimate basis for authority (Morris 1998a; 2000: 109-191). All citizen men (counting male children, usually probably one-quarter to one-third of the resident population) were considered fundamentally equal, regardless of differences in wealth, education, or lineage. This belief-system was accompanied by unusually strong gender and ethnic distinctions. In the fifth century, large numbers of non-Greeks were imported as chattel slaves into those poleis where male egalitarianism flourished most strongly. In Attica, there were probably at least 60,000 slaves out of a total resident population of 350,000. Slaves could be found in virtually every walk of life, including war (Hunt 1998), although there is controversy over the scale of their use in agriculture (Wood 1988; Jameson 1992).

Some poleis, most notably Sparta, made little use of chattel slaves, instead exploiting unfree local populations. The Spartans believed themselves to have invaded Laconia in prehistoric times, and to have a right to rule over the local non-Dorian

population as a warrior elite. In the eighth century, they conquered neighboring Messenia, and reduced its whole population to serfdom. They fought a great war to secure their control of Messenia in the mid seventh century, and in the sixth century they tried to extend this system to Arcadia. This effort was defeated at Tegea in the 560s. The need to control the helots seems to have dominated Spartan policy and thought until the Thebans won the battle of Leuctra in 371 and liberated Messenia (see Hodkinson 2000: 113-50). Syracuse also had a dependent population, called the Killyrioi, although this seems to have been less threatening than the Spartan helots.

The distribution of wealth across citizen families was comparatively even. The Gini coefficient for landholding in fourth-century Athens (see p. 000 above) is lower than that for all but two of the 1970s agrarian Mediterranean communities studied by John Davis (1977, scoring .22 to .87), or any of the Roman communities studied by Richard Duncan-Jones (1990: 129-42, scoring .39-.86). The 0.1 percent of the Athenian arable in Phainippos' estate ([Demosthenes] 42; Ste. Croix 1966) compares just as poorly to the 7.6 to 21.6 percent in Duncan-Jones' Roman studies. Landholding was particularly ideologically charged, however, and this pattern probably understates the overall degree of wealth inequality. We know of fifth-century Athenians holding very large estates overseas (see p. 000 below), and differential access to the "invisible economy" (p. 000 above) must have skewed the distribution of wealth.

The Spartiates prided themselves on their economic equality, even calling themselves the *homoioi*, "those who are alike." But Hodkinson (2000) shows that on careful reading, the sources show that there were real differences in economic power, partly masked by an egalitarian ideology that restrained overt displays of wealth. Discomfort with such displays of personal wealth increased all over Greece around 500 BC, but by 425 we can see clear movement back toward more lavish elite behavior in housing, dress, burial, and personalized monuments (Morris 1992: 108-155; 1998b).

Overall, we should conclude that wealth was quite evenly distributed in Greece by comparison with most other complex societies in Mediterranean history, although not so evenly distributed as the Greeks themselves liked to proclaim. The pressures toward conformity to "middling" norms built steadily across the seventh and sixth centuries, peaking in the fifth century, and then began to weaken. In Hellenistic times economic power shifted back toward the upper class.

### 5.6. *Political structures*

From the seventh century on, most poleis were ruled by oligarchies of relatively wealthy men. Sometimes these were narrow; other times, they incorporated most citizens. There was a strong sense that the ruling elite was answerable to the ordinary citizens, and (particularly in times of war) incompetent or corrupt leaders could be overthrown by popular opposition. Normally they were replaced by another group of oligarchs, but sometimes a sole ruler (*tyrannos*) would emerge. By classical times, and probably since the seventh century, there was general agreement that tyrannies could never be truly legitimate. Few lasted more than two generations. Tyrants all but disappeared by 500 in the Aegean, although they became much more important in the fifth and fourth centuries in Sicily. The Syracusan tyrants relied heavily on mercenaries to keep the population under control. Beginning in the later sixth century, we see a third response to political

failure, with the ordinary male citizens taking over direct rule for themselves—what the Greeks called *demokratia*, or “power of the people.”

The constitutions of the Greek states were enormously varied, and I limit myself to brief observations on the three most important states in fifth-century Greece.

### 5.6.1. Athens

The Athenian democracy of 508-322 BC focused on an Assembly open to all male citizens over the age of eighteen voted directly on all major issues, with only a minimal bureaucracy, no political parties, and weakly institutionalized offices (Hansen 1991). Usually 6000 or more citizens attended meetings, which, in the fourth century, took place at least forty times each year. A handful of offices, particularly financial ones, had wealth qualifications, and the holders of these and military offices were elected by the Assembly. But most offices were open to all citizens, or all citizens over thirty, and were filled by lot. All office holders were subject to public scrutiny at the end of their year in office, and these reviews were one of the major arenas for pursuing politics.

Elite political networking was always important, but by the 440s direct appeals to the assembled citizens—normally at least 6000 showing up for each meeting—could be decisive (Connor 1971). Thucydides (2.65) claimed that until Pericles’ death in 429, Athens was a democracy in name, but was in fact ruled by this one man, whose charismatic authority allowed him to guide the people:

Pericles, by his rank, ability, and his known integrity, was able to exercise an independent control over the multitude—in short, to lead them instead of being led by them; for as he never sought power by improper means, he was never compelled to flatter them, but, on the contrary, enjoyed so high an estimation that he could afford to anger them by contradiction. (Thucydides 2.65)

Thucydides concedes that in 430 many Athenians were so angry over the loss of their property in the war that they voted Pericles out of his generalship and fined him; but “not long after, according to the way of the multitude, they again elected him general and committed all their affairs to his hands” (2.65).

The Assembly’s agenda was prepared by the *boulê*, a Council of 500 men selected largely by lottery from all citizens aged over thirty years. The term of office was one year, and no citizen could serve more than twice, which meant that given the demographic facts of Athens, virtually every citizen would serve. The cumbersome procedures of the *boulê* democratized decision-making, severely limiting the scope for any faction to get control of any key institution (Rhodes 1972). This emphasis on incorporating as many citizens as possible led to the introduction of pay for citizens to attend the jury in the 440s, and the extension of this principle to the Assembly in 403.

The overwhelming emphasis on politicians’ abilities to persuade a mass audience at a single meeting through his powers of speech created enormous pressures in Athens. One rhetorical misstep could lead not merely to the failure of a carefully planned policy, but to a politician’s fall from grace, exile, or death.

[Athens’] leaders had *no* respite ... they had to lead in person, and they had also to bear, in person, the brunt of the opposition’s attacks. More than that, they walked

alone ... A man was a leader solely as a function of his personal, and in the literal sense, unofficial status within the Assembly itself. The test of whether or not he held that status was simply whether the Assembly did or did not vote as he wished, and therefore the test was repeated with each proposal. (Finley 1985b: 61-62)

This was “deep play,” as Clifford Geertz (1973: 412-53) called it: politicians were always in over their heads, playing for enormous stakes. The Assembly was full of connoisseurs of rhetoric (Thucydides 3.38), ready to pounce on speakers’ blunders. But there was also great fear that speakers would pander to the people, saying whatever would get votes. The Sausage-Seller in Aristophanes’ *Knights* (424 BC) was the perfect caricature, but Thucydides (2.65) insisted in all seriousness that Athens lost the Peloponnesian War because its leaders after Pericles’ death “adopted methods of demagoguery which resulted in their losing control over the actual conduct of affairs.” Many historians have concurred: “Athens lost the war at Aegospotami, but the disarray of Athenian politics for several years previously had made something like Aegospotami all but inevitable” (Strauss and Ober 1990: 72).

While some educated Athenians were eager to form a political elite, others went along with democracy only because they profited from it (Thucydides 8.48), and others still resisted it. In 457, critics plotted with Sparta to launch an oligarchic coup (Thucydides 1.107), and in 411 actually seized control in the wake of the demoralization caused by failure in Sicily. But on the whole the democracy was remarkably stable, and the major legacy of the critics—including Plato, Aristophanes, the Old Oligarch, and Thucydides himself—was a sophisticated critique of popular power (Raaflaub 1989; Ober 1998). These oppositional texts have been massively influential in modern times, portraying the democracy as willful, irresponsible, and ignorant. But Finley was surely right to conclude that

Much of the credit for the Athenian achievement must go to the political leadership of the state. That, it seems to me, is beyond dispute. It certainly would not have been disputed by the average Athenian. Despite all the tension and uncertainties, the occasional snap judgment and unreasonable shift in opinion, the people supported Pericles for more than two decades ... These men, and others like them (less well-known now) were able to carry through a more or less consistent and successful programme over long stretches of time. It is altogether perverse to ignore this fact, or to ignore the structure of political life by which Athens became what she was, while one follows the lead of Aristophanes or Plato and looks only at the personalities of the politicians, or at the crooks and failures among them, or at some ethical norms of an ideal existence. (Finley 1985b: 74-75)

I will argue below that it was not an inherent democratic tendency to produce leaders who sold out that brought down Athens in 404: it was a single, massive, battlefield blunder.

### 5.6.2. *Sparta*

Sparta governed itself in a very different way, through four main institutions:

- 1) There were two kings, one each from the Agiad and Eurypontid dynasties. These were the chief religious and military officers of the state, although following problems in 506 BC, only one of them was sent with the army on each campaign.
- 2) The kings were policed by a council of five ephors, elected from all Spartiates aged over thirty for one year at a time. The ephors were chosen by acclamation: whichever five nominees got the loudest cheers when they appeared before the citizen Assembly won the office. Two ephors accompanied the king on campaign, and the ephors could depose the kings. However, they were also subject to scrutiny by the next group of ephors at the end of their year of service. A man could only be an ephor once.
- 3) The *gerousia*, or Council of Elders, consisted of the two kings plus 28 men over the age of sixty elected from the Spartiates. The Assembly could only vote on measures that the *gerousia* had approved. The *gerousia* further had the right to dissolve the Assembly if it took a decision that they disapproved of, and sat in judgment on any cases involving penalties of disenfranchisement, exile, or death.
- 4) The Assembly consisted of all male Spartiates aged over thirty. No decision was official state policy until the Assembly had approved it, but unlike the Athenian Assembly, the Spartans did not discuss proposals: they only voted (by shouting).

The Spartan system was widely idealized in antiquity as a “mixed constitution,” perfectly blending monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements (Tigerstedt 1965-78). In practice, however, politics worked in much more complicated ways. From the age of seven until they married after thirty (and often still then), Spartan men spent most of their time in male-only age sets and dining groups. These created strong cross-cutting ties, which were reinforced and complicated by institutionalized pederasty (Cartledge 1981). Patronage played a larger role in decision-making than at Athens (Hodkinson 1983: 263-65; Cartledge 1987: 139-59), and Aristotle described election to the *gerousia* as *dynasteutikê*, “on dynastic principles” (*Politics* 1306 a 18-19).

The complexity of Spartan institutions and the importance of extra-constitutional powers created a situation in which it was never clear where exactly the buck stopped. Energetic kings, like Pausanias or Agesilaos, could develop far more influence than the formal details of the division of powers would lead us to expect, while others, like Pleistoanax, found themselves outmaneuvered by aggressive ephors. When the dynamics were more balanced, power was dispersed across several institutional contexts. Sometimes this led to paralysis if no consensus could be reached (Redfield 1977/78: 154), but on other occasions it left room for exceptional men from outside the power elite, like Brasidas and Lysander, to achieve prominence. Hodkinson concludes that

for all the uniqueness of the Spartiate upbringing and way of life [the political system] perpetuated the existence of a typical Greek aristocracy. Fragmentation of authority and some freedom of decision for the assembly ensured the sharing of influence among the leading lineages which made up this aristocracy. This was threatened by the excessive influence of outstanding individuals and, like all normal aristocracies, the Spartiate aristocracy did its best to control such men. (Hodkinson 1983: 280)

The same institutions fostering obedience and respect for authority that helped Sparta to field the firmest and most reliable hoplite armies perhaps restricted the scope for effective and imaginative leadership. Herodotus (8.4-5, 49-83) and Thucydides (1.68-71) both emphasized the Spartans' slowness; and once removed from the checks and balances of the political arena at home, Spartan leaders tended to behave erratically and to be unusually open to corruption. Thucydides concluded that "the Spartans proved to be quite the most remarkably helpful enemies that the Athenians could have had" (8.96).

### 5.6.3. *Syracuse*

The sources are very thin: no more than half a dozen chapters in Herodotus on the Deinomenid tyrants, a scattering of anecdotes in Diodorus and a few passing comments in Thucydides on the democracy, and an extremely hostile tradition about Dionysius I.

All our anecdotes imply that the tyrants acted solely in pursuit of their own goals, but we have few clues about how they worked with, or without, other institutions in Syracuse. For what it is worth, Gelon seems to have been staunchly anti-democratic. He took power in 485 by supporting the landed *gamoroi* against the poorer citizens, and Herodotus (7.156) attributes to him the remark that "the masses are very disagreeable to live with." Nino Luraghi (1994: 369) and Sebastiana Consolo Langher (1996: 286-88) insist that we should not see Gelon's position in such simple terms, but the sources they appeal to are not impressive. It is commonly said that Diodorus (11.26) attests the survival of a popular Assembly under Gelon, because the tyrant appealed to the masses by appearing before it unarmed; but what Diodorus actually says is that Gelon called an assembly of his troops, as part of his plan to keep them loyal to him. If anything, the story emphasizes Gelon's dependence on military rather than popular institutions. His heavy use of mercenaries and willingness to enroll them as citizens suggests that he saw himself as outside Syracusan civil society, as perhaps befitted an interloper from Gela. The thank-offerings he and his brother Hiero sent to Delphi and Olympia for their victories in 480 and 474 are ambiguous. Gelon styled himself a Syracusan, while Hiero distinguished between "Hiero, the son of Deinomenes, and the Syracusans" (Meiggs and Lewis 1969: nos. 28, 29). Diodorus (11.38, 66) calls Gelon and Hiero *basileis*, but there is no way to know exactly what constitutional implications this description has. Pindar three times called Hiero a *basileus* (*Olympian* 2.23; *Pythian* 2.60; 3.70), and once a *tyrannos* (*Pythian* 3.85). Herodotus (7.156, 161) used both terms, and the fact that Pindar could use both titles in a single poem suggests that we should not seek constitutional niceties here.

Aristotle (*Politics* 1304 a 27) described the regime set up in 465 as a *politeia*, or middle ground between aristocracy and democracy. Consolo Langher (1996: 288-95) is at pains to emphasize the influence of the *chariestatoi*, or "best men," but Diodorus' descriptions do not justify this. His most significant comment on the *chariestatoi* is at 11.92, where he speaks only of disagreements in 451 over what to do with the Sicel leader Douketios, with the mass of citizens favoring a hard line, and the *chariestatoi* being more lenient. In other passages Diodorus (11.86-87) emphasizes demagogic elements in the 450s, the brief institution of an equivalent to the Athenian ostracism, and threats of tyranny. Possibly Diodorus' perceptions were colored by his knowledge of Athenian democracy, and there are some hints that elected officers held more power at Syracuse than Athens. Thucydides (6.35, 38) mentions the importance of a board of

generals in 415, and even after the reforms of Diocles in 412, which gave important new powers to the people (Diodorus 13.34-35), Diodorus nevertheless tells us that in 406 a group of *archontes* fined Dionysius for speaking out against the generals (13.91).

Our understanding of Dionysius I's constitutional position and methods of ruling is no better. He used the title *strategos autokrator*, "sole-ruling general," and an office of admiral is attested. His treaty with Athens in 368 (Tod 1948: no. 136 = Harding 1985: no. 52) definitely refers to civic institutions other than the tyrant himself, but is broken at the crucial point.

### 5.7. Religion

Greek religion was polytheistic (generally, see Burkert 1985; Buxton 2000). At the core were a dozen Olympian gods, who had come to power through a great struggle with Kronos, the Titans, and Typhoeus (Hesiod, *Theogony* 453-885). At their head were Zeus and Hera, who behaved in many ways much like a human couple (Sissa and Detienne 2000). There was general agreement on the structure of the pantheon, although gods were worshipped with different epithets in different cities. But alongside the Olympians was a host of semi-divine heroes, nature spirits, and chthonic powers known only from curse inscriptions, most of them peculiar to one location (Faraone 1992).

Compared to most ancient Mediterranean societies, religious authority was remarkably unimportant in classical Greece. At Athens, there were a few priesthoods reserved to specific families or descent groups, but most were open to all citizens, and filled by lot (Garland 1984). Isocrates (2.6) even said that "they believe that the office of ... priest is one that anyone can fill." Herodotus (1.132) was amazed that in Persia a religious specialist was required before an offering could be made to the gods; in Greece, anyone could make a sacrifice. The Delphic oracle had considerable prestige, but even this could be challenged. When the Athenians sent to Delphi to ask whether they should resist Persia or not in 480, the answer they got seemed to be saying no, so they sent back for another, and got a more satisfactory response (Herodotus 7.140-43). In Sparta, oracles carried more weight (e.g., Herodotus 5.90-91; Thucydides 5.16). Hodkinson (1983: 273-77) ascribes this to a constant search for sources of authority in a fragmented political structure (see section 5.6.2 above), and Spartans had a reputation for being foolishly superstitious. In Athens, religion seems to have been carefully circumscribed. Attempts to link religion and politics were always disastrous, as when Themistocles built a small shrine of Artemis Aristoboule (i.e., Artemis of the Wise Counsel, referring to his own advising role at the battle of Salamis in 480) next to his house in the 470s. The temple is unassuming enough (Vanderpool 1964), but Plutarch (*Themistocles* 22) says that this outraged the Athenians, and played a large part in Themistocles' fall from favor and flight from the city.

Religion played virtually no part in legitimizing or stimulating Greek state-formation. Assyrian kings were driven to make war to force earthly rivals to recognize Ashur's supremacy in the divine hierarchy; Cyrus claimed that he had to take over Babylon to restore the religious order that Nabonidus had neglected; and all his Achaemenid successors represented themselves as fighting to ensure the victory of the Truth over the Lie (Kuhrt 1995: 509-518, 676-86; Bedford, this vol.; Wiesehöfer, this vol.). But Athenians made no such claims. The most explicit discussion of the

relationship between the divine realm and interstate power relations comes in Thucydides' Melian Dialogue, when the Athenians say

So far as the favor of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have. Our aims and our actions are perfectly consistent with the beliefs that men hold about the gods and with the principles that govern their own conduct. Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist forever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the gods are concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. (Thucydides 5.105)

Athenian justifications of power never appeal to special relationships with the gods: they are ruthlessly secular, either stating rational principles, as at Melos in 416, or claiming that Athens' service in the Persian Wars justifies power over other states, as at Sparta in 432 (Thucydides 1.73-77). Temples played a part in war and state-building, but it was more as repositories of wealth than as dispensers of divine favor. The Athenian state borrowed heavily from the goddess Athena (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 369, 375, 377 = Meiggs and Lewis 1969: nos. 72, 84 = Fornara 1983: no. 134, 154, 158), and Thucydides (1.143) had Pericles worry that the Spartans might plunder the treasuries of Olympia and Delphi to hire mercenary sailors.

## **6. How, and how much, did the Athenian Empire change Greek society?**

In this section I argue that the Athenian Empire moved the Aegean toward a social structure like that in Fig. 4.2, and stimulated other states to begin or accelerate similar trends elsewhere in the Greek world. I try to make my case in three ways.

First, I review the surviving evidence under four broad headings of political/military, economic, administrative, and cultural changes. All the data I present are already well known to scholars, but their significance has been obscured by the lack of clearly focused questions. I conclude (i) that Athens was in the process of becoming the capital of a larger territorial state; (ii) that this process accelerated after 431; (iii) that war and preparation for war were its primary motors; and (iv) that there is every reason to assume that the process would have continued had Athens not been defeated in 404.

In the second section, I look outside the Athenian Empire at other examples of state-formation in the fifth-century Greek world (particularly Sparta and Syracuse). I review the surviving evidence, and argue that in all cases state-formation either began or speeded up in response to Athenian state-formation.

The Athenian Empire was clearly the proximate cause of most of these processes of state-formation, but in the third section I ask whether in fact these processes would have occurred anyway (and perhaps have proceeded more rapidly) if the Athenian Empire had either never come into being or had fallen apart in the 470s or 460s. To answer this question, I first construct a tree diagram of possible "branching worlds" in the period 490-460, and then argue that no plausible alternative would have produced so

much centralization as the actual Athenian Empire. I conclude that the Athenian Empire changed the structure of Greek society more than any other process that could realistically have emerged in the fifth century BC.

## 6.1. *Social change in the Athenian Empire*

### 6.1.1. *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 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 (e.g., Rawlings 1977; Raaflaub 1979b; Giovannini and Gottlieb 1980; Robertson 1980). The evidence is simply insufficient to resolve these debates, but since the main activities in the 470s and 460s were clearly directed against Persia (Thucydides 1.98-100), we do not need to go into details 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 supported Athens in these endeavors. After 413 there was more general resistance to Athens, although some cities remained very loyal.

(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. Returning to the calculation I made in n. 1 on p. 1 above, subjects of the Greater Athenian state were paying about half as much for security as subjects of the Roman Empire under Augustus. Ruschenbusch (1983; 1984; 1985) has argued that tribute paid provides proxy data for the size of each city’s population. His argument has some of the same weaknesses as Pounds’ (see section 5.2 above), but he is surely right that most cities in the alliance did not have enough men to man a ship even if they had wanted to.

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 in 439 and 427 respectively after failed revolts, 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 compromise that ensued was perhaps the perfect result for Athens: 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.* Writing a century after the events, Isocrates (4.104) noted that the political system created in 477 provided general peace in the Aegean. As so often, he had a polemical point to make, but we should bear in mind that we never hear of Athens' subject cities fighting one another—in marked contrast to the sixth century, when even though our sources are meager they record numerous wars between these same poleis. Presumably the Athenian near-monopoly of state violence made wars between the subject cities 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).

#### 6.1.2. *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 Hellenpont.

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, so 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 there would be little left over from the tribute after covering 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<sup>3</sup> 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 (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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 34, 52, 68), and some cities fell behind on their payments (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 61). Between 433 and 423 BC Athens took out loans from Athena adding up to nearly 6000 talents (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 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 done this, and that it brought in 200 talents. *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 21 also

refers to an *eisphora* in Miletus, probably in 426/5, 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 (*enkykkliai*) 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 percent 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 may 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 apparently 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 percent tax on all goods passing through the Hellespont, although Callias’ financial decree (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 52.7; probably passed in 422/1) refers to a “10 percent 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 percent 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<sup>3</sup> 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. D. M. 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 (A. H. M. Jones 1954: 168-74; Brunt 1966; Erxleben 1975). 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 46.40*), and there is other evidence of Pericles’ concern to limit the number of Athenians ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 26; Plutarch, *Pericles* 37).

But whatever its other results, the Athenian land-grab 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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. Demosthenes (36.5-6) comments that Pasion owned much land in Attica before he became a citizen and that Phormion did the same through a citizen intermediary, but everything about these cases suggests that they were strange exceptions. 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.

### 6.1.3. 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 it 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 back well into archaic times, but others were new. The *archontes* were Athenians resident in the cities, clearly with some significant power (e.g., *IG* i<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 14.13-14; 34.7; Aristophanes, *Birds* 1021-34; Harpocration, s.v. *episkopos*), and the *phrouroi* and *phourarchoi* were some kind of military establishment in the cities (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> .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). The Old Oligarch (3.11) says that Athens once supported an oligarchy because it was convenient, but that they soon revolted and massacred the commoners. Historians working from the Tribute Lists have proposed a variety of scenarios for what happened here (e.g., Gehrke 1980; Robertson 1987), but Athens definitely restored democracy quickly (Piérart 1983-85). Athens 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 40.5-10, 71-76; Balcer 1978). 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<sup>3</sup> 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.

#### 6.1.4. 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.* Something like 10 percent of all Greeks lived in Athens, so under normal circumstances we should expect about the same percentage of famous artists and writers to have lived there. However, as Table 4.3 shows, this was not the case: five times as many of the cultural figures whose names have survived came from Athens as we would expect if the distribution were random, and seven times as many spent all or substantial parts of their careers there. Unless we want to assume that Athenians were just naturally more talented than other Greeks, we have to conclude that Athens drew in so many of the best artists, writers, and thinkers from the rest of Greece that it became a cultural hothouse, in which native Athenians were disproportionately likely to excel.

The obvious explanation is that the wealth that flowed through Athens made it the most important center of artistic patronage. There is even some evidence that Pericles deliberately promoted Athens’ role as a cultural capital. Thucydides (2.41) had him 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 was a major motive, but he also had 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, this was what it was by the 420s. 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 comedy about what it felt like to go back to his hometown after making good in the big city (ap. Athenaeus 15.698d-99c). The result was an extraordinary cultural efflorescence, arguably unparalleled until Florence in the sixteenth century. Once this cultural dominance had been established, it proved durable, surviving the defeats of 404 and 338, and lasting into Roman times (Ostwald 1992).

I briefly want to consider two alternative explanations. The first is that Athens' cultural dominance pre-dated the empire and had no causal connection to it. Athenian vase painters produced much of the finest work in Greece for five centuries before the establishment of the empire or the democracy, particularly the Late Geometric Ia "Dipylon style" in the mid-eighth century. But from the seventh century on, vase-painting was a minor art as compared to sculpture and architecture, and the best archaic examples of these two genres were non-Athenian (Hurwit 1985). Only one out of the twenty to twenty-five archaic poets whose work survives was Athenian. The turnaround in Athenian cultural dominance was abrupt, and falls in the early fifth century.

Boedeker and Raaflaub (1998a: 322-25) present a second possibility, noting that while fifth-century Athens was certainly a rich imperial city, it was also a rich *democratic* city. Only a little Athenian art directly celebrated the empire, and even less celebrated the democracy (Castriota 1992; 1997; Boedeker and Raaflaub 1998b), but they must be correct that democratic institutions and openness gave greater scope for the multitude of talented people in Athens to push artistic and intellectual expression in directions that would not have been possible elsewhere. The dramatic festivals of the Great Dionysia and the opportunities for rhetoric, which were both specifically democratic, gave Athens overwhelming dominance in tragedy, comedy, and oratory (although Syracuse produced, and retained, notable figures in all these fields). Andrea Nightingale (1995) and Josiah Ober (1998b) have also argued that opposition to democracy was a major factor in pushing the intellectual circles around Plato and Thucydides to develop such sophisticated positions.

Overall, I would suggest that the Athenian cultural miracle owed most to the combination of unusual levels of investment in cultural innovation all over archaic Greece, an unprecedented concentration of financial capital in Athens, and a handful of prominent men (particularly Pericles) who self-consciously strove to make Athens a center of patronage. The fact that Athens had democratic institutions doubtless influenced the particular direction the artistic, literary, and intellectual communities took as they formed.

(b) *Shared coinage*. Finley (1978a: 309 n. 47; 1985b: 168-69) emphasized the political dimensions of Klearchos' Coinage Decree (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 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 minimized 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 assume that because the shift toward Attic standards facilitated the collection of tribute and the activities of traders (as it clearly did), 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; Fehr 1979-81; 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<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> 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). There were other traditions, claiming that the founders of Colophon came from Pylos (Mimnermos, fragment 9 West), and those of Priene from Thebes (Hellanikos, fragment 4 *FGrH* 101), but if Herodotus is any witness (1.143, 147; 5.97; 8.62; 9.97), Athenians and Ionians alike took the Athenian 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<sup>3</sup> 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 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). In other passages justifying Athenian power, Thucydides' speakers do not appeal to common Ionian descent (e.g., 1.75-76; 5.89), and in his catalogue of the Athenian allies at Syracuse, he emphasizes the complexity of factors involved, some ethnic, and some pragmatic (7.57).

Thucydides may not have thought that religious ideology was very important, but 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 percent on barley and 0.08 percent on wheat), and invited all cities in Greece to follow suit (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 78). As late as 380 BC Isocrates (4.31) says that this practice was still common, which makes it sound as if numerous cities responded, and thought of it as a serious religious obligation.

#### 6.1.5. *Conclusions*

The Aegean world was changing rapidly between 478 and 404. Athens emerged as its cultural and economic center, controlled its foreign policy and armed forces, and intervened frequently in other cities' internal affairs. This was a period of rapid state-formation: by 404, the Aegean looked much more like Fig. 4.2 than it had ever done before. War and preparation for war drove this process of state-formation. The sources tell different stories about each episode, but fear of Persia was behind Athens' decision to create a large fleet in 483, the general acceptance of Spartan leadership in 481, the switch of allegiance to Athens in 478, and the acceptance of Aristides' structure for the alliance in 477. We have no direct evidence for why the cities generally supported Athens' use of force to prevent would-be free-riders from leaving the Empire in the 470s-430s, and acquiesced in Athens' interference in local constitutions. We might construct a formal model of the decision-making process, which would need to include mass-elite tensions, pay for rowing, plunder from the anti-Persian wars in the 470s-450s, rivalries between the subject cities, fear of Athenian punishment, and fear of Persia (and later Sparta). Finally, after 431, the costs of war drove Athens to increase the tempo of state formation.

#### 6.2. *Secondary state-formation*

Thucydides (1.23) says that "What made [the Peloponnesian] war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta." We can generalize his conclusion more broadly: Athenian state-formation and the fear it inspired in other Greeks stimulated defensive state-formation all over the Greek world.

Of the many possible examples, I will describe just five:

1) *Olynthos*. In 432, as tensions mounted between Athens and Corinth, the Athenians decided to make a preemptive strike by ordering Potidaea, one of its subject cities, to pull down its city walls and cut ties with Corinth, its mother city. At the same time, Athens planned an attack on King Perdiccas of Macedon, and ordered the invasion fleet to reduce Potidaea on its way to Macedon. This played into Perdiccas' hands: for some time he had been urging the Greeks of Chalcidice to abandon their home towns and form one big city at Olynthos. Trapped between a potentially hostile Macedon and Thrace (Thucydides 2.101) and a definitely hostile Athens, the latter intent on extending its power over Potidaea, the Chalcidians now formed a union and prepared for war (Thucydides 1.56-58). We know few details of the state-building activities of the Chalcidian League, but they were clearly successful, since it proved a major thorn in the Athenians' flesh. After 404, the League engaged in long struggles with both Sparta and Macedon, before being dissolved by the former in 386 and Olynthos being destroyed by the latter in 346 (Zahrnt 1971).

2) *Thebes*. There is some debate over whether there was a Boeotian federal league dominated by Thebes as early as 500 BC (Buck 1979: 107-120), but if so, this structure was broken up after 479 in retaliation for Thebes' support of Persia. In 458 a Spartan army fought a small war in Doris, and on its way home passed through Boeotia. Diodorus (11.81) says that the Thebans persuaded Sparta to restore their city's walls and force the other Boeotians to accept Theban leadership, in return for a Theban commitment to Sparta to take a lead against Athens. Thucydides (1.107) has a completely different explanation for why Sparta and Athens fought the battle of Tanagra in 457. Nancy Demand (1982: 31-33) argues the case for Diodorus; but even if his account of early state-formation is correct, Athens' domination of Boeotia between 457 and 447 (Thucydides 1.108) again reduced Thebes to a weak city-state. After 447 the Thebans created a new Boeotian League, which gave them substantial control over the foreign policies of other cities. For the next sixty years, Thebes was the only Boeotian city to mint coins (Salmon 1978; 1994; Maffoda 1999: 89-100). According to Theban speakers in Thucydides (3.62; 4.92; cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1470 a 2), Thebes was able to draw other Boeotian cities into its orbit largely because they were always fighting each other. Just as Athens did in the Aegean, Thebes imposed order in Boeotia, centralizing its policies and armed forces.

The first act of the Peloponnesian War was a Theban surprise attack on Plataea, in an attempt to use the general war with Athens to expand the Boeotian League (Thucydides 2.2). Thebes pressed ahead with this policy in the war's first few years, persuading and/or compelling the populations of the smaller, unwalled Boeotian cities to move to Thebes (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 17.3). Thucydides (3.68) says that when Plataea fell in 426, Theban citizens took its land on ten-year leases—rather like Athenians had done on Lesbos the year before. Fear of Athens and fighting against Athens seem to have been central to Theban state-formation. The Boeotian fears had substance; Demosthenes was planning an attack as early as 426, and when he launched it in 424 he did so in the hope that the Boeotians might feel so oppressed by Thebes that they would revolt (Thucydides 3.95; 4.76). Thebes took the lead in resistance, helping Tanagra in 426 and holding the place of honor on right wing at Delion (Thucydides 3.91; 4.93), but combined example with coercion, taking advantage of heavy Thespian losses in this battle to force that city to dismantle its walls (Thucydides 4.133). By 404 Thebes was a major power, negotiating on equal terms with Sparta, and directly owed much of this to its leadership against Athenian designs on Boeotia

3) *Mytilene*. In 428, Thucydides tells us, “the Mytileneans were forcibly making the whole of Lesbos into one state under the control of the Mytileneans.” The Mytileneans had intended to revolt later, after strengthening their fortifications, and were caught by surprise when Athens got wind of the plot in 428; but they refused to give up the union (*xynoikesis*) of Lesbos (Thucydides 3.2-3). We have no details of exactly what the Mytileneans were doing to unify Lesbos (Quinn 1981: 000), since Athens immediately besieged the city, which fell in 427; but once again, state-formation was a response to Athenian power.

4) *Syracuse*. In 427, Syracuse and all the Dorian cities of Sicily except Camarina had begun a war with Leontinoi, Camarina, and the Chalcidian cities (Thucydides 3.86). Syracuse had an alliance with Sparta, and Athenian forces joined in fighting all around eastern Sicily on the Leontinian side (Thucydides 3.90, 99, 103, 115; 4.24-25). In 424,

ambassadors from all the Sicilian cities met at Gela and formulated a general peace. According to Thucydides, this was in direct response to fear of Athenian intentions. Thucydides had Hermocrates say that “we should realize that this conference is not simply concerned with the private interests of each state; we have also to consider whether we can still preserve the existence of Sicily as a whole. It is now, as I see it, being threatened by Athens, and we ought to regard the Athenians as much more forcible arguments for peace than any words that can be spoken by me” (Thucydides 4.60). There are indications that Athens continued its designs, particularly in western Sicily, right through the following decade (Giangiulio 1997), and Thucydides had Hermocrates make much the same arguments in 415 (6.33).

4) *Sparta*. In order to defeat Athens, Sparta ended up having to replicate certain features of the Empire, above all its ability to raise revenue to pay for a fleet (Cartledge 1987: 34-54). Sparta had made autonomy for the Greek cities the basis of publicly stated policy since 431, but there is no sign in our sources that anyone seriously considered breaking up the defeated Athenian in 404. One reason for this seems to have been fear of other secondary states stimulated by war with Athens: the Thebans urged Sparta to destroy Athens altogether (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.16), but the Spartan leadership was apparently worried that it needed to keep Athens as a counterbalance to Thebes.

In all five cases, accelerated state-formation was a direct response to Athenian aggression or fear of it. But a sixth case, Argos, is rather different. After terrible casualties in the battle of Sepeia around 494 BC, Argos had lost control of the entire Argive plain, including even such tiny neighbors as Mycenae and Tiryns. The close alliance between Athens and Argos’ traditional enemy Sparta in the 470s created an alarming situation, and in the 460s Argos rapidly reincorporated the rest of the plain into a larger Argive state (Herodotus 6.83; Diodorus 11.65; Strabo 8.6.10-11). Athens’ breach with Sparta 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 (Thucydides 6.7). Argos was driven not by fear of Athens but by fear that Athens would fail to balance Sparta. Where other states centralized to defend themselves against Athenian power (and in some cases to use fear of Athens as an excuse to swallow up smaller neighbors), Argos centralized when Athens was not acting powerfully enough. But this seems to have been an exception: Athens never had any designs on Argos, and saw her chiefly as a potential ally against Sparta. The general pattern in the Aegean and Sicily between 478 and 404 was secondary state-formation in response to the Athenian Empire.

### 6.3. *Counterfactuals*

There is, then, a chronological coincidence between the Athenian Empire and state-formation within its territories and in the territories of some of the states that it came into contact with. But is that enough for us to conclude that the Empire caused this process? Is it possible that things would have developed in much the same way if the Athenian Empire had never existed?

The only way to answer this question is through a counterfactual thought-experiment. Fig. 4.3 shows the main possible “branching worlds” that might have come into existence in the early fifth-century Aegean, with the key decision nodes—490, 480,

478/7—marked. We could, of course, push this experiment further back in time, looking at the likely consequences of the Pisistratids holding onto power in 510, Isagoras defeating Cleisthenes in 508/7, or the Spartan alliance defeating Athens in 506 (all of which seem perfectly plausible counterfactuals given the limited evidence available). It would be interesting to spin “what-if” stories about these possibilities, but none would help us to define the causal role of the Athenian Empire in fifth-century state-formation. If any of these three possibilities had come to pass, Athens would probably not have gone to the assistance of the Ionian rebels in 499, thus provoking the 490 and 480 invasions. Maybe Persia would have attacked anyway, but there is no way to estimate what might have happened in such a fifth century. The counterfactuals, though entertaining, have no analytical value. But we can make some useful statements about possible alternative outcomes following the Athenian embassy’s disastrous offer of earth and water to Darius in 506 and Athens’ decision to support the Ionians in 499 (Herodotus 5.73, 97).

#### 490 BC

What if the Persians had won the battle of Marathon? This counterfactual meets Ferguson’s requirements, in that plenty of Greeks apparently thought it was the most likely outcome in 490. Herodotus says that five of the Athenian generals expected to be defeated if they gave battle (6.109), and adds that “till then, the Greeks were terrified even to hear the name of the Medes” (6.112). Datis and Artaphernes would still have needed to take Athens, of course, but there was apparently a pro-Persian party ready to let them in. Herodotus did not believe that the Alcmaeonids were traitors, but was certain that someone flashed a signal to the Persians that day (6.124). His account of the battle (6.111-15) makes it sound as if the lightly armored Persians in fact stood little chance once they clashed with the Athenian and Plataean hoplites, but a Byzantine lexicon says that

When Datis had invaded Attica, they say that the Ionians [in the Persian forces], when he had withdrawn, went up to the trees, and signaled to the Athenians that the cavalry were apart. Miltiades, learning of their departure, thus attacked and conquered. Hence the proverb is applied to those who break ranks. (*Suda*, s.v. *choris hippeis* [trs. Fornara 1983: no. 48])

Military historians have argued endlessly over whether this detail is true (e.g., Hammond 000). If it is, then perhaps the Athenians thought they had no chance until Datis loaded the Persian cavalry back on his ships, presumably so that he could transport them to Athens for a sneak attack on the city. The Athenians then seized their window of opportunity to snatch victory.

So this counterfactual may be plausible. If Persia had taken Athens in 490, the immediate consequence would presumably have been a massacre and the deportation of many of the survivors into the heart of the Persian Empire. This was standard Persian procedure (Wiesehöfer, this vol.), and precisely what they had done that same summer to the Naxians and Eretrians (Herodotus 6.96, 101). Hippias, Athens’ former tyrant, had been an exile in Persian territory since 510, constantly urging Artaphernes to reinstate him. Since the Persians brought him along in 490, we should assume that their next step

would have been to reinstall him as a puppet ruler over whatever Athenians remained, and any other people they chose to settle at Athens (Herodotus 5.96; 6.107).

At that point, we can postulate three main lines of development. First, Darius might have been content to have punished Athens and Eretria, and after establishing them as the furthest northwestern limits of his empire, turned his attention to weightier matters. Second, he might have used them as bases for further conquests; and third, the Greeks may have driven him out.

The first possibility does not seem very likely. Herodotus (3.120, 134, 139-49; 7.8) took it for granted that the Achaemenid rulers looked to expand the empire whenever possible, and that satraps were always looking for fresh opportunities. He has the Persians consider conquering Ethiopia (3.17-19), Libya (4.167, 200-204), southern Italy (3.137-38), Carthage (3.17), and even Sardinia (5.106). We do not know how much Herodotus knew about Persian intentions, but there is some Persian evidence that Darius took an ecumenical view of his empire (Herrenschmidt 1976; 1980), and there is general agreement that his western policy was expansionist (Gallotta 1980: 143-212; Briant 1996: 191-94). Herodotus' interpretation is certainly consistent with the way that Darius had steadily encroached into the Aegean and Balkans since 514 (Briant 1996: 151-52, 168-73). Herodotus adds that in 491 Mardonios had planned "to subdue as many Greek cities as possible," until a storm at Mount Athos destroyed his fleet (6.44).

Given the ambivalence and hesitation of many Greeks about joining the anti-Persian alliance in 481/0 (Herodotus 7.140-52, 168-74), we should probably assume that had Athens fallen in 490, many—perhaps most—Greeks would have Medized. But Herodotus is very clear that Sparta had no intention of doing so, and despite putting religious obligations above rushing to Athens' aid in 490, had been eager to fight (6.106, 120). If I am right to suggest that Darius would not have stopped with Athens and that Sparta would not Medize, then a Persian-Spartan war in the early 480s seems highly likely.

It is difficult to judge the plausibility of the third possibility, that the Greeks would have driven the victorious Persians out. On the one hand, even with their phalanx in disarray at Plataea in 479, the Spartans shattered Mardonios' numerically superior Persian force (9.46-71), and might have done equally well a decade earlier. On the other, Mardonios' army in 479 was considerably smaller than Xerxes' in 480 (Herodotus 8.113), and unsupported by a fleet. Herodotus (7.139; 9.9-10) was certain that Persia would have overwhelmed Greece in 480-79 but for the Athenians' contributions, suggesting that a full Persian effort in the early 480s, with Athens defeated, should have led to Sparta's defeat. The Greeks may well have revolted when Darius died in 486, but Xerxes crushed all the other revolts of the 480s, and the Daiva inscription (Wiesehöfer 1996: 47) suggests that he saw vigorous military activity as part of his role. Herodotus (9.2) had the Thebans counsel Mardonios in 479 to divide the Greeks through bribery, which would presumably have been much easier after victories over Athens (and perhaps Sparta); and if Persia had followed a victory over Sparta with freeing the helots, Spartan power may have collapsed as abruptly as in 371.

Overall, the most plausible outcome of a Persian victory at Marathon was a steady Persian expansion across the whole of Greece in the 480s-70s. It does not seem very likely that Persia would have stopped with just Athens under control; even if they had, they would probably have quickly been drawn into war with Sparta. But without a strong

Greek fleet, even if the Spartan hoplites won on land, they could not hope to expel the Persians from Greece. But that said, Meyer's drastic counterfactual (p. 000 above)—that Greek rationalism would then be extinguished by mysticism and despotism—now seems extreme. After all, Ionian philosophy flourished under Persian rule in the later sixth century, Herodotus was born in the Persian Empire, and Mardonios established democracies in Ionia in 492 when it seemed expedient (Herodotus 6.43). There is no reason to assume that Persia's famous "multiculturalism" (Wiesehöfer, this vol.) would have made huge changes to the direction of Greek intellectual history, and contrary to older interpretations, Persian control of Ionia seems not to have seriously interrupted Greek prosperity (Balcer 1991). N

None of the plausible outcomes of a Persian victory at Marathon seems to lead to anything like the process of state-formation documented in section 6.1 above. We should probably assume that fifth-century Persian Greece would have been just as fragmented as later sixth-century and fourth-century Persian Ionia.

#### *480 BC*

What if the Persians had won the battle of Salamis? Herodotus (8.56-64, 70-83) believed that but for Themistocles' cunning, the Greeks would have tried to defend the Isthmus of Corinth instead of fighting at Salamis, and that the result would have been total defeat. If he is right, then 480 was an even closer-run thing than 490, and we have to treat a Persian victory as a very plausible outcome. I suggest that the consequences would have been similar to those sketched for 490, except that there was never any doubt that the Persians now intended to conquer all of Greece (Herodotus 7.138), ruling out option 2. Option 3, a Greek revolt, would probably have had even less chance to succeed after a Persian victory in 480 than it would have done at Darius' death in 486. If the Greeks had agreed to Gelon's terms for Syracusan aid in 481 and had made him commander of the united forces (Herodotus 7.157), the Carthaginian attack would still have prevented him from coming to their aid that year. The plunder he won at Himera would presumably have made it easier for him to consider invading the Aegean, but it seems implausible to think that he could have seriously threatened the Persians. Herodotus had Gelon offer to provide 200 triremes, and David Asheri (1992: 151) speaks of the Tyrrhenian Sea "gradually becoming a Syracusan lake" in the 470s. But it is hard to know what to make of the speeches that Herodotus gives to his characters, and the best evidence we have for a Syracusan shipbuilding effort on the scale of the Athenian and Persian navies comes only in 439, when the city built 100 triremes (Diodorus 12.30). If Eurybiades had refused to fight at Salamis and the Athenians had fulfilled Themistocles' threat of sailing away to Siris (Herodotus 8.62), we might imagine them returning with Gelon or Hieron to seek revenge in the 470s. But Syracuse had its own problems, including a naval confrontation with Etruria in 474. Nor was Syracuse in any position to take advantage of the customary revolts after Xerxes' death in 465, since a civil war of its own broke out in 466, and its power collapsed by 463.

A Persian victory in 480 seems even likelier to have reduced Aegean Greece to the status of a province than the same result would have been in 490, forestalling any kind of state-formation along the lines of what the Athenian Empire accomplished.

#### *478/7 BC*

This is perhaps the most significant branching point in Fig. 4.3. There are three main short-term counterfactuals worth considering. First, Sparta could have hung onto control of the alliance. Second, the Ionians might have accepted the Spartan proposal that they relocate to new homes on the Greek mainland. And third, the anti-Persian alliance could have fragmented.

The first of these seems quite implausible. Donald Kagan suggests that “There is some reason to believe that the Spartans might have led the fight for freedom against Persia and maintained their undivided hegemony for some time had Pausanias’ character been different” (Kagan 1969: 37-38), but that judgment ignores too much. Thucydides (1.95) says that the islanders and Ionians asked Athens to take over the alliance from Sparta in 478. The Athenians “welcomed [these approaches, and] made up their minds to put a check on Pausanias and to arrange matters generally in a way that would best suit their own interests.” Meanwhile, the Spartan ephors, alarmed at Pausanias’ self-aggrandizement, recalled him. His supporters were strong enough to acquit him but not to get him sent back out to the fleet. Instead, Dorcis was sent with just a small force, which sounds very much as if the general mood among the Spartan leadership was against trying to head the alliance if it meant naval war. When the allies rejected Dorcis the Spartans sent no more commanders, because, Thucydides says, “They feared that when their officers went overseas they would become corrupted, as they had seen happen in the case of Pausanias, and at the same time they no longer wanted to be burdened with the war against Persia” (1.95). Herodotus (8.3) is blunter, saying simply that “as soon as they had driven out the Persian and were fighting for his territory rather than their own, the Athenians stripped the Lacedaemonians of their primacy (though nominally this was because of the arrogance of Pausanias).” [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 23) has a similar story, that “it was Aristides who saw that the Spartans had gained a bad reputation because of Pausanias and urged the Ionians to break away from the Spartan alliance.”

It sounds as if the Athenians were eager to take charge, the Ionians and islanders welcomed this, and a majority of the Spartan leadership favored leaving the costly naval war to Athens. Pausanias’ blunders gave the Athenians, islanders, and Spartan “peace party” a pretext to settle matters, but even had he behaved with as much diplomacy as the Athenian leaders (Plutarch, *Aristides* 23; *Cimon* 6), it seems unlikely that Sparta could have retained control. They had a divided leadership, no real fleet of their own, and inadequate financial resources. Some Spartans were angry at what they saw as Athenian duplicity (Thucydides 1.92), and Diodorus (11.50) says that in 475 there was a move to reassert Spartan control. Some historians reject this story as a fourth-century fabrication. Antony Andrewes (1966: 4-5) gave good arguments for accepting it, but if we do so, we also have to accept that Hetoimaridas easily talked the “war party” out of action. Resentments lingered, but there is nothing to suggest that the Spartans would have done any better leading a maritime alliance in the 470s than they were to do in the 390s. Further, in 404 the Spartans inherited structures that the Athenians had built up over seventy years and an income (according to Diodorus [14.10]) of more than a thousand talents, while in 478 would have had to have built these institutions for themselves. We should suspect that even with a well behaved Pausanias, Sparta would have lost control very quickly.

Had the Athenians failed to lead such strong opposition to the Spartan suggestion that the Ionians relocate to the mainland (Herodotus 9.106), more possibilities open up.

Most likely, I suggest, if the Ionians had relocated the Athenians and islanders would have formed an anti-Persian alliance anyway, along the same lines as actually happened, but militarily and financially weaker. Thucydides (1.95) says that the Ionians had been the most anti-Spartan faction when Pausanias and Dorcis were rejected, so perhaps the islanders would have accepted Spartan authority. But given Athens' overwhelming naval dominance by 478, and the still lower strategic significance Sparta would have attached to naval warfare if Ionia had been evacuated, Athens would probably have been left at the head of a reduced Delian League.

The third possibility, that the anti-Persian alliance would simply have broken down, also seems unlikely. The evidence does not allow us to say decisively what reasons were given for the alliance's continuation in 478 (see p. 000 above), but the sources provide arguments in abundance, from fear to revenge to profit. And had the alliance indeed broken down, or even lacked the Ionians, the situation might quickly have reverted to something like 480, with the Greeks facing a new Persian invasion. It is too easy to assume that Xerxes recognized 479 as the end of his bid to control Greece. The battle of Eurymedon in the early 460s (Thucydides 1.100; Plutarch, *Cimon* 12-13) sounds very much like a preemptive strike against a new Persian invasion force, with a 200-strong fleet and large army. If the Athenians had not been able to lead a united force, Xerxes might yet have been master of Greece.

In 478, the most likely outcome was what actually happened: that Athens would preserve and take over the anti-Persian alliance, minus Sparta. Small differences in the speeches made or votes cast could indeed have led to continued Spartan attempts to control the alliance, an Ionian emigration, or the breakdown of the alliance. But none of these are plausible as *long-term solutions*. It seems highly likely that if the Spartan "war party" had had the best of the arguments in 478/7, within a few years Sparta would still have withdrawn from leadership. In that situation, or in one in which the Ionians and islanders decided to reject all leadership in 478/7, either Athens would persuade these cities to join a maritime alliance before the Persians returned, or Persia would have invaded again in the early 460s, leading to a replay of the choices available at the 480 BC node.

#### *460s-430s BC*

We should consider one final counterfactual: that the various revolts against Athens during the Pentekontaetia might have succeeded, just as the "Social War" did in the 350s. Thucydides (1.98-99) makes it sound as if this was not a very realistic possibility, and that as the 470s and 460s wore on, the balance of power tipped steadily in Athens' favor. Perhaps had the earthquake and subsequent helot revolt not happened, Sparta would have invaded Attica to support the revolt of Thasos (Thucydides 1.100-101), with greater success than after the Long Walls were built. However, Sparta's efforts in the 450s were lackluster (Thucydides 1.107-112). Even in the great crisis of 447/6 (Thucydides 1.113-14; Plutarch, Pericles 22-23), there is no sign that the Athenian Empire was in any real danger of collapse. I return to this issue on p. 000 below, but I suggest that as early as about 470 the Aegean had reached a new equilibrium point, from which virtually no imaginable shock would be able to dislodge Athens.

This simple exercise points toward two conclusions. First, once the Greeks had won the 480-479 war, it was overwhelmingly likely that during the 470s Athens would emerge as the leader of an Aegean alliance of more or less the same extent as actually happened. And if some strange circumstance had prevented that, or if the Persians had won in 490 or 480, any processes of state-formation that continued would have been very different from and far weaker than those documented in section 6.1 above. It would be a mistake to argue that state-formation would have proceeded in much the same way even if the Athenian Empire had not formed, because the only plausible counterfactuals involve a Persian conquest. Therefore we can reasonably call the Athenian Empire the cause of these changes: had it not formed, the changes would not have happened.

Second, it looks very much as if the only possible way for any Aegean state to initiate a process of state-formation on this scale was the way that actually happened—for Athens to take over a voluntary association and gradually reduce its allies to subjects. It is unrealistic to think Sparta could have done this. Even when Sparta took over a fully formed empire in 404, it rapidly lost control. Nor does it seem likely that had the Ionians and islanders rejected Athens as well as Sparta in 478, that the Athenians could have forced them into submission in the 470s. The Athenian fleet was far larger than any conceivable rival, but Athens could not have paid for it long-term without the tribute from the subjects. Themistocles' attempts to extort money from the islanders in 480 (Herodotus 8.111-12) had rather mixed results. If Athens had started reducing the islands one by one, presumably at a certain point fear would have led the smaller cities to submit; but how likely is it that the situation would ever have reached that point? The sieges of Samos and Potidaea were terribly expensive and drawn-out (section 6.1.2.a above), and we should assume that those of Naxos and Thasos were just as bad. The Spartans were willing to intervene in 465/4 to help Thasos leave the alliance when they felt that Athens had acted unjustly (Thucydides 1.101); we should probably assume that an outright expansionist policy by Athens would have provoked the same result much faster. There could not have been a process of state-formation like that which actually happened had the Ionians' and islanders' fear of Persia not been enough to lead them to accept Athenian control.

If this conclusion is correct, it has major consequences. As noted in section 4.2 above, the eighth century seems to have been a turning-point in Greek state-formation. Turmoil resulted from rapid population growth and the sudden expansion of Mediterranean-wide contacts. Settlement patterns and hierarchy were transformed and we see a revival of monumental architecture and writing, and various hints that power was being centralized within small communities (Snodgrass 1980: 15-24; Morris 1998b). We can identify at least four basic paths to state-formation in this period (Fig. 4.4).

A) The first is typical of the area A in Fig. 4.4, around the shores of the Aegean. This region filled up with hundreds of small communities. Many were too small to be properly autonomous, but their political boundaries nonetheless apparently changed little between about 700 and 500 BC. There is some evidence that they were emphasizing their mutual borders even before 700, and they created a packed, highly structured landscape. They tended to emphasize egalitarian male citizenship. This was the area where chattel slavery and male democracy were most prominent by 500.

- B) The northern and western parts of archaic Greece were characterized by much larger, looser states, sometimes run as federal associations, and sometimes ruled by kings. Citizenship was less important than in area A, and various types of serf labor more important than chattel slavery.
- C) Sparta found a third way out of the problems of the late Dark Age by conquering Laconia and neighboring Messenia, and reducing the populations to helotage. This combined elements from solutions A and B: the Spartan *homoioi*, “those who are alike,” were in some senses the ultimate egalitarian male citizens, but were ruled by kings, abstained completely from agriculture, and lived off the labor of serfs (Cartledge 1996: 178-81).
- D) Finally, some communities fissioned under the strains of the eighth-century revolution, sending out independent colonies, particularly to Sicily and southern Italy. These colonies generally looked something like model A, and may indeed have been a catalyst for development in that direction back in the mainland. However, they were generally larger and agriculturally richer than the Aegean city-states, and developed more fluid interstate relations than in zone A.

We hear of many small wars in area A in archaic times, but few annexations or major boundary changes. This was a densely packed landscape, and hoplite warfare developed into highly ritualized forms. Either no polis wanted to pursue state-formation through expansion, or no polis could concentrate the coercive or financial means that would allow them to do so. Although our sources are meager (Berve 1969), some of the archaic tyrants centralized institutions within the small city-states, but they generally only held onto their positions for one or at most two generations, before being overthrown. State-formation was stalled, and even by 500 most states in area A had very limited powers.

In area B, there was much more fluidity, including tribal movements. But kings and federal authorities generally had little control over the powerful aristocracies in their territories. Thessaly experienced periods of significant power when one leader was able to bring the federation together. In the late sixth century, Thessalian cavalry briefly dominated Phocis and even intervened at Athens; but Thessalian power was unstable and easily broke down. Comments in Herodotus (2.167; 5.3-8; 9.119) and Thucydides (1.136; 2.29, 67-68, 80-81, 95-101) suggest that the northern Greek states remained disorganized and weak relative to the Aegean states until the end of the fifth century, and Plutarch (*Pyrrhus* 1) says that Greek structures only came to Epirus under king Tharyps, around 400. After that there were extremely rapid advances, and by 370 Jason of Pherae seemed set to overrun southern Greece (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.4.28-32). Our evidence is meager, but it may be that Athenian and Spartan activities in northern Greece in and after the Peloponnesian War stimulated this accelerated state-formation.

Areas C and D saw the most dynamic archaic state-formation, but had very different trajectories. Sparta had conquered Messenia through a long war in the late eighth century, but had to fight another great war to confirm its position in the middle of the seventh. It was probably after this that the helotage system reached something like the form we know it from classical sources, feeding a citizen population that perfected hoplite warfare. Sparta then renewed its expansion in the early sixth century, but was disastrously defeated in Arcadia in the 560s. This was a critical moment, but our information is limited to three chapters in Herodotus (1.66-68). We should probably

assume that following defeat by Tegea, Sparta recognized that its hoplite military technology had reached the limits of its striking power. By 550 an entirely new strategy had taken shape. Instead of expanding the state through conquest, annexation, and serfdom, Sparta started using diplomacy to build up a loose Peloponnesian League. This was extremely successful: Herodotus (1.56, 59) says that around 546 Athens and Sparta vied for the distinction of being the leading Greek state, but that Athens “was being held subject and split up by Pisistratus.” Be that as it may, Sparta seems to have been recognized as the leading power in sixth-century Greece, and automatically took charge of the anti-Persian alliance in 481. However, Spartan leaders generally hesitated to venture beyond the Isthmus. When they intervened at Athens in 510-506, they quickly found that given the forms of their military technology and the structures of the Peloponnesian League, it was not easy to impose their will so far from home.

In area D there were open frontiers, in the sense of valuable lands occupied by non-Greek peoples, and most states seem to have consistently pushed inland in the sixth century, expelling the indigenous peoples or reducing them to serfdom. By 500, Syracuse probably controlled something like 1000 km<sup>2</sup>, Selinus closer to 1500 km<sup>2</sup>, and Acragas perhaps 2500 km<sup>2</sup> (De Angelis 2000). These cities had the potential to grow vast amounts of grain (Castellana 1985; Fantasia 1993; De Angelis 2000). Herodotus (7.158) says that Gelon offered to feed the whole Greek army in 480, and in 427 Athens intervened in Sicily partly in the hope of cutting off grain supplies to the Peloponnese (Thucydides 3.86). The spectacular temples that Selinus, Acragas, and Syracuse began building perhaps attest to the profits that they expected their states to make from taxes on this trade, though we should also note that none of the “super-temples” was completed.

State-formation was proceeding steadily in area D in archaic times, and Syracusan activities in the fifth and fourth centuries (surveyed in Consolo Langher 1997) should probably be seen as a logical development from this. But things were very different in the Aegean. State-formation had stalled in area A, had made very little progress at all in area B, and had been blocked in area C by 550. The old Greek world had reached an equilibrium, with Sparta as a major but regional military power, Athens as a potential but undeveloped rival, and Thessaly as an occasional threat.

I conclude that the Persian invasions of 490 and 480 were an exogenous prime mover that pushed the Aegean out of the late archaic equilibrium. I have argued in this section that if the Persians had won, state-formation in the Aegean would have been closed off. As it was, resistance to Persia triggered secondary state-formation in the later 480s, with the Athenian decision to build a super-fleet and Sparta’s decision to organize a Hellenic League. The Greek victories created a situation where by 478 the only really likely outcome was that Athens would take charge of a largely consensual anti-Persian alliance, which could gradually be converted into a Greater Athenian state in the Aegean. So far as I can see, this is the only way that the tempo of state-formation could have accelerated in the fifth-century Aegean. But the Athenian defeat in 404 closed off this avenue. As the fourth-century record shows, once the fifth-century Athenian Empire was destroyed, no polis could recreate it. Even fear of Macedon was not enough.

## **7. Why did the Athenian Empire (or one of its competitor states) not become a major multiethnic empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome?**

I argued in section 6 that Athens was the only Aegean state that could possibly have accelerated state-formation in the fifth century. We may thus remove Sparta from consideration and reformulate this question as follows: why did neither Athens nor Syracuse become a major territorial empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome?

To answer this question, we need to clarify its terms. The following typology builds on the definitions that I set out in section 4.1 and encompasses the plausible range of outcomes for Athens and Syracuse:

1. Athens (option 1A) or Syracuse (option 1S) would become the capital of a multiethnic empire, like Assyria, Persia, or Rome
2. Athens (2A) or Syracuse (2S) would become the capital of a panhellenic state/empire, including all or nearly all Greeks, and perhaps some (though not many) non-Greeks
3. Athens (3A) and/or Syracuse (3S) would become the capital of a dominant regional state, in the Athenian case controlling the Aegean coasts, the mainland, and Crete, and in the Syracusan case controlling Sicily and southern Italy
4. Athens (4A) and/or Syracuse (4S) would become the capital of a limited regional state, in the Athenian case most likely controlling roughly the area of the Delian League after 446 BC, and balanced by Sparta or some coalition of powers, perhaps supported by Persia; and in the Syracusan case most likely controlling Dorian Sicily and balanced by a coalition of non-Dorian Greeks and perhaps Carthage
5. Neither Athens (5A) nor Syracuse (5S) would become a regional power, instead existing in an environment of independent city-states or of very local powers
6. Athens (6A) and/or Syracuse (6S) would be incorporated into states/empires ruled by other Greek powers
7. Athens (7A) and/or Syracuse (7S) would be incorporated into multiethnic empires ruled by non-Greek powers. Either of these outcomes would probably mean that the rest of the Aegean and Sicily would rapidly follow

Following Ferguson's rule, I begin by examining evidence showing which of these options were seriously considered by fifth-century Athenians and Syracusans, and how the actual events fit into this typology. I then proceed to ask if these outcomes were inevitable.

## *7.1. State-building aims*

### *7.1.1. Athens*

I begin, as in section 6, in 490 BC. At this point, Athens' state policy was simply to prevent outcome 7A, although Herodotus' story of treason shows that some Athenians would rather submit to 7A than put up with the democracy.

In 480, avoiding 7A was again the top priority. Accepting Spartan leadership involved moving some way from 5A toward 6A, and the Spartans' attempt to stop Greek cities from rebuilding their walls in 479/8 (Thucydides 1.89-91) shows that this was a real issue. Herodotus (8.3) says that in 481 there had been talk of Athens commanding the united fleet, but "When the allies objected, the Athenians gave way; they thought that what mattered most was the survival of Greece ... So because the Athenians knew this, they put up no resistance, but yielded, but only so long as they had urgent need of the others."

Our sources are very clear that there were serious divisions over strategy in the early 470s among the leading men in Athens, even if some of the stories they tell sound apocryphal. Plutarch (*Themistocles* 20) says that Themistocles wanted to move directly to position 4A by burning the Greek fleet as it lay at Pagasai. He made a speech saying he had a plan that promised great advantages for Athens, but could not be spoken of in public. The assembled Athenians told him to share it with Aristides, who then “told the people that no proposal could be more profitable, or at the same time more outrageous.” On Aristides’ recommendation, the Athenians decided not to go ahead with it. However, Aristides was in no sense against Athenian state-building. [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 24) represents Aristides as urging the Athenians to take charge, so that they could all be financially supported by the subject cities. The major policy disagreement was over whether Athens should try to work with Sparta, or treat it as an enemy. Aristides and Cimon supported the first option, and worked together to create situation 4A while driving the Persians out of the Aegean. [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 23) says that the more conservative elements in Athens, organized around the Areopagus council, enjoyed a resurgence in the 470s and limited the influence of Themistocles, who is consistently portrayed as anti-Spartan. But there is no hint that anyone seriously wanted to return to position 5A at this point.

The great political crisis of 462/1, leading to the diminution of the Areopagus’ powers, the ostracism of Cimon, and the murder of Ephialtes, also reoriented Athenian goals. The brief narratives in Thucydides and [Aristotle] do not discuss motives, but Athens’ actions in central Greece in the early 450s (alliances with Megara and Argos, overrunning Boeotia, war with Corinth) point toward 3A. On the high dating of 458/7, Athens’ alliance with Segesta could be seen as a sign of interest in 2A, but that now seems to be mistaken (see section 2.1 above). However, the invasion of Egypt in 459 might represent an interest in leap-frogging toward 1A. Thucydides’ tantalizing remarks (1.104, 109-110) leave it open whether the Athenians hoped merely to weaken Persia further, protecting the Aegean, to effect a permanent presence in Egypt, or both. There is also argument over the scale of the Athenian intervention. Thucydides makes it sound comparable with the Sicilian expedition, which might suggest that 1A was the goal, but many historians have argued that it was in fact much smaller (Robinson 1998).

When the Athenian land empire collapsed and the Thirty Years’ Peace was signed in 446, Pericles deliberately opted for outcome 4A, gradually increasing Athens’ centralization of resources: “Pericles had said that Athens would be victorious if she bided her time and took care of her navy, if she avoided trying to add to the empire during the course of the war, and if she did nothing to risk the safety of the city itself” (Thucydides 2.65). He persuaded the Assembly to stick to this policy until 429, even though some Athenians talked of a new bid for 1A, recovering Egypt or attacking Carthage or Etruria (Plutarch, *Pericles* 20). The renewal of older (undated) alliances with Rhegion and Leontinoi in 433/2 shows that interest in the west remained strong (Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 63; D. M. Lewis 1976). Pericles assured the Athenians that they were becoming the dominant power in Greece, so we should probably assume that his intention was to increase Athenian resources to the point that the drift toward 3A was irresistible. He avoided entanglements that might threaten Athens’ secure position, but was ready to go to war with Sparta in 431 in defense of what he saw as legitimate Athenian interests, such as the Megarian Decree (Thucydides 1.140-44). Thucydides

(1.23) is very clear that in spite of Athens' avoidance of aggressive expansion in the previous fifteen years, the decisive element in Spartan thinking in 431 was fear of Athens' growing power. This makes most sense if we assume that they agreed with Pericles that a process of quiet Athenian state-formation, brutally crushing rebellions and intensifying the Empire's institutional structure, would (relatively soon) tip the balance of power decisively against them.

Pericles' war goal was to preserve 4A, knowing that compelling Sparta to accept this situation would hasten the movement toward 3A. Thucydides (2.63) has him say that option 5A no longer existed, because if Athens gave up the Empire, its vengeful former subjects would seek to destroy it. The Athenians had so many enemies (Thucydides 2.8) that their only options were 4A and 6A. From this perspective, the Peace of Nicias in 421 was an Athenian victory. After Pericles' death, however, more ambitious plans surfaced, such as Demosthenes' attempts to form an anti-Spartan alliance in the western parts of the Greek mainland and his invasion of Boeotia in 424. Both these aimed to move to 3A by military means. Athens' substantial involvement in the Sicilian war of 427-424 was intended partly to explore the possibility of conquering the island (Thucydides 3.86; 4.65), moving directly to 2A; and in 424 Aristophanes (*Knights* 1302-1304) made jokes about Athenian ambitions against Carthage, implying that 1A had its advocates.

Alcibiades apparently rejected Nicias' negotiated return to 4A not for strategic reasons but for reasons of personal and political rivalry (Thucydides 5.43). His immediate goal was to get other Greeks to do the work of moving Athens to 3A, putting together a Peloponnesian alliance around Argos and forcing Sparta to risk everything on a single battle. The outcome apparently restored Peloponnesian confidence in Sparta (Thucydides 5.75), reinforcing 4A, but the Athenians followed it up with much more drastic measures. First, in 416 they tried to force the Dorians of Melos into the Empire, ending up by massacring the men and enslaving the women and children (Thucydides 5.85-116); and then in 415 they attacked Sicily. The fragmentary inscription recording the decision to help Segesta and Leontinoi (*IG I<sup>3</sup> 78*; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 93) says nothing about Syracuse, let alone conquering Sicily, but Thucydides (6.6) is clear that this was always planned. Their goal seems to have been to move to 2A by taking over the whole island and then crushing Sparta. Thucydides (6.1) emphasizes that most Athenians were horribly ignorant about Sicily, and Ober (1998a: 104-121) argues that Thucydides' point was that the Assembly had by now lost its grip on reality. Be that as it may, Alcibiades apparently planned to move to 1A by conquering Carthage too (Thucydides 6.15), although both Athens and Syracuse ended up seeking a Carthaginian alliance (Thucydides 6.88, 34).

After 413 Athens faced a desperate struggle to preserve 4A, with 5A very clearly not an option, and 6A (or even total destruction, as Thebes and Corinth urged in 404) as a very real possibility. Assessments of Athens' objective situation apparently varied wildly. Diodorus (13.52-53) says that when in 410 Sparta offered peace terms that would allow Athens to keep the substantial part of the Empire that it still held, "the sentiments of the most reasonable men among the Athenians inclined toward peace, but those who made it their practice to foment war and turn disturbances in the state to their personal profit chose war." He particularly blames Cleophon. [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 34.1) tells virtually the same story but sets it in 406: "some were eager to accept but the masses were not." Again led by Cleophon, the Assembly insisted on a full return to 4A. This

near-doublet suggests a source problem, and Xenophon mentions no peace offers. But we should probably assume that even at this late stage in the war a return to something like 4A was possible. However, within a year of [Aristotle]'s version Athens had lost its fleet at Aegospotamoi, and within two years had surrendered.

In 404 Athens moved abruptly to 6A, but this position was unstable. Sparta had dealt badly with the Ionian Greeks to secure Persian aid, and by 396 had little alternative but to go to war with the western satraps. Persian intrigues in Greece then led to the Corinthian War in 394 and the King's Peace in 386, imposing a much-diluted version of Spartan control in the Aegean. By 378 Athens was able to form a new League, though this never began to approach the First Empire as a centralized state (Cargill 1981; Dreher 1995). When Athens did try to implement centralization, its allies/subjects broke away, and in 355 Athens had to concede. The mid fourth-century situation moved uneasily between 5A and 6A, with elements of 7A. Philip of Macedon's victory in 338 imposed 7A, although the maneuverings of the Hellenistic kings allowed Athens to preserve substantial elements of 5A. Athens entered alliance with Rome in 200 BC, and by the mid second century was effectively at position 7A.

### 7.1.2. *Syracuse*

Many of the Greek cities in Sicily had been expanding at the expense of the indigenous population since their foundation, but state-formation took a radically new direction in the 490s. Beginning in 498, Hippocrates, tyrant of Gela, rapidly captured Kallipolis, Naxos, Zancle, and Leontinoi. Our evidence for this is very poor: we do not even know if Herodotus (7.154) lists Hippocrates' successes in chronological order, and have no idea what triggered these whirlwind victories. It is not likely to have been a response to fear of external aggression, like Athens' capitalization on resistance to Persia twenty years later. Herodotus (7.158) has Gelon say in 481 that he had fought an earlier war against Carthage, and Justin (19.1) sets this before 489. But most historians regard Herodotus' story as later fifth-century propaganda, inflating Gelon's role as a defender of Hellenism, although it has its defenders (e.g., Maffoda 1996: 46-55). If true, it could refer to the first years of Gelon's rule at Gela, or conceivably to the earlier 490s, when he was a cavalry commander under Hippocrates. If the latter, we might argue that Hippocrates' expansion was a response to fear of Carthage, perhaps connected to the stories of Dorieus' raid on western Sicily around 510 and his struggle with Carthage's presumed ally Segesta (Herodotus 5.46; Diodorus 4.23; Pausanias 3.16). But the evidence will scarcely bear this weight. More likely, in a situation of pervasive inter-state competition, perhaps accentuated by the ambitions of a group of newly established tyrants, Hippocrates exploited a temporary battlefield advantage, perhaps through using Sicel and Arcadian mercenaries (Luraghi 1994: 165-69). We do not know what Hippocrates intended, although the deal he made in 492, leaving Syracuse independent in return for control of Leontinoi, hardly suggests grand ambitions to be more than a regional east Sicilian power.

Hippocrates' death in 491 raises further differences between Aegean and Sicilian state-formation which need to be addressed at this point. In Athens, some political leaders were more aggressive than others about expanding state powers, but the democratic Assembly seems to have followed a consistent policy of moving toward 4A in the 470s-460s, and toward 3A in the 450s. In Sicily, though, tyrants vigorously pursued state-

formation, while the citizens as a whole often opposed it. When Hippocrates died there was a democratic uprising. His former cavalry commander, Gelon, crushed this and established himself as tyrant. Apparently his first years were troubled, but he then developed state power in four new ways:

1. Probably between 488 and 485, he established a double marriage alliance with the Emmenid dynasty of Acragas (Luraghi 1994: 222, 255-57).
2. After intervening in a civil war in Syracuse in 485 and overthrowing its democracy, he transferred his own seat from Gela to Syracuse, and installed his brother Hieron in Gela.
3. He either initiated or massively expanded the system of hiring mercenaries loyal directly to the tyrant, and used them against Syracuse's citizens as well as against other cities.
4. He physically transferred all the citizens of Camarina, half those of Gela, and the rich from Megara Hyblaea and Euboea to Syracuse, selling the poor from the latter two cities into slavery (Herodotus 7.156). His brother Hieron moved people around even more freely, depopulating Catana in 476 and resettling it with 10,000 immigrants from Syracuse and the Peloponnese (Diodorus 11.49).

The fourth of these policies has obvious parallels with Assyrian and Persian imperialism (Bedford, this vol.; Wiesehöfer, this vol.), but also has Sicilian antecedents, such as Anaxilas' capture of Zankle from Gelon around 489 and repopulation of it with Dorian refugees (Herodotus 7.164). It was a highly effective form of state-building, particularly when combined with option no. 3 by settling groups of mercenaries in new towns or mixing them in with other populations. Syracuse retained political control over the new foundations, extending its territory and population.

Syracusan state-formation also differed from Athenian or Spartan in being carried out by tyrants who saw themselves as standing largely outside the civil society. Thucydides (1.17) famously observed that "in the Hellenic states that were governed by tyrants, the tyrant's first thought was always for himself, and for his personal safety, and for the greatness of his own family." Some Aegean tyrants moved from one city to another in just these years (Herodotus 6.4-5, 34-40), but none were so successful at personalizing power as Gelon. Thucydides continues the passage quoted above by adding that "no great action ever came [from the tyrants]—nothing, in fact, except for the tyrants of Sicily, who rose to great power." The Deinomenid dynasty's state-building was disconnected from the citizen structures that dominated Aegean sociopolitics. Thucydides had Alcibiades say that

"The Sicilian cities have swollen populations made out of all sorts of mixtures, and there are constant changes and rearrangements in the citizen bodies. The result is that they lack the feeling that they are fighting for the own fatherland; no one has adequate armor for his own person, or a proper establishment on the land. What each man spends his time on is in trying to get from the public whatever he thinks he can get either by clever speeches or by open sedition—always with the intention of going off to live in an other country, if things go badly with him. Such a crowd as this is

scarcely likely either to pay attention to one consistent policy or to join together in concerted action.” (Thucydides 6.17)

Alcibiades’ prediction of course turns out to be disastrously wrong, but this was perhaps because his own counterfactual ignored the problem of cotenability. His description of Syracusan sociology seems to fit the facts, although the arrival of an Athenian army intent on conquest transformed these dynamics.

Fig. 4.4 is a variation on Fig. 4.2, aiming to show how in the 480s the Deinomenid-Emmenid alliance sat on top of the citizenries of its subject territory. Its control of mercenaries and the general fluidity of Sicilian social structure made its social power very different from that of the Athenians in their attempt to impose their whole citizen body as a ruling elite over the Aegean. On the one hand, tyrannical marriage alliances, the tyrants’ ability to give cities to their relatives, the relocation of entire populations, and the use of mercenary hoplites made Syracusan state-formation very different from Aegean processes. On the other hand, the chronological coincidence between the Deinomenid and the Athenian state-formation is suggestive, and at a more abstract level we can see certain similarities. Most obviously, both Athens and Syracuse converted concentrations of capital into concentrations of coercive power, the former through its fleet, the latter through its mercenaries. By 481 Gelon was recognized as a great prince (Herodotus 7.157: *megas tyrannos*), although there is nothing to suggest that the Athenians took the idea of buying power from him.

Gelon’s ambitions are obscure. The famous story of his offer in 481 to provide to provide 20,000 hoplites, 6000 light infantry, 2000 cavalry, 200 ships, and food for the entire Greek host in return for command of the combined forces (Herodotus 7.158) implies an ambition to move to 2S, a panhellenic Syracusan domination. However, Herodotus’ other story (7.163) that Gelon sent Kadmos to Greece in 480 with earth and water to make submission to Xerxes if he won equally implies willingness to accept a combination of 3S or 4S with 7A—Syracusan domination of some or all of Sicily as a Persian vassal.

His war with Carthage in 480 is equally ambiguous. Around 482, Gelon’s ally Theron of Acragas expelled from Himera its pro-Carthaginian tyrant Terillos. Terillos was the guest-friend of Carthage’s leading general Hamilcar, and persuaded him and Hippocrates’ and Gelon’s old enemy Anaxilas of Rhegion to restore him. Diodorus (11.20) speaks of a secret plan between Carthage and Persia to conquer Greece simultaneously from east and west, while Herodotus (7.165) seems to think that the only issue was whether Himera would end up in the Carthaginian or Syracusan bloc. A story grew up that the decisive battle at Himera was fought on the same day as Salamis (Herodotus 7.166; Diodorus 11.24), and Gelon certainly went to pains to represent it as an equivalent triumph over the barbarian (Pindar, *Pythian* 1.72-80), including lavish dedications at Delphi, promoting himself as the savior of Hellenism (Krumeich 1991). These claims imply an anti-Carthaginian crusade comparable to Athens’ efforts against Persia in the 470s, but in fact Gelon immediately concluded a treaty, extracting a 2000 talent indemnity in addition to huge plunder from the Carthaginian camp.

When Gelon died in 478 his brother Hiero moved up from Gela to Syracuse, assigning another brother, Polyzalos, to rule Gela. Hiero began a new round of forced resettlements, and in 476 his ally Theron of Acragas also claimed to have refounded

Himera with Dorian settlers. In contrast to the Athenian imposition of tribute and state officials on subject cities, the Deinomenid strategy was to concentrate as many people as possible in Syracuse, and to plant loyal ex-mercenaries or immigrants in new cities like Aitna (Luraghi 1994: 335-54). In 474, Hiero sent his fleet to Cumae, where it defeated an Etruscan navy (Diodorus 11.51). As if competing with Gelon's memory, Hiero dedicated a golden tripod at Delphi (Athenaeus 6.231-32) and rich spoils at Olympia (*SEG* 33.328 = Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 29), and Simonides (fragment 34) represented the Deinomenids as bringing war to all barbarians who opposed the Greeks. As in 480, the tyrant was speaking the language of panhellenism, implying a goal like 2S or even 1S, but again there was no change to the Syracuse-Acragas axis within Sicily, somewhere between positions 4S and 3S.

Syracusan power collapsed abruptly after the deaths of Theron and Hiero in 472. Theron's successor Thrasydaios raised an army against Syracuse, only to be overthrown in a coup, and for Acragas to descend into a civil war between citizens and the tyrant's unpaid mercenaries. Syracuse was drawn into the war in the early 460s, and a war broke out in Gela in 466. In the same year, Thrasyboulos, the final Deinomenid, found himself at war with his own citizens. He was deposed in 465, but the civil war between enfranchised mercenaries and "old" citizens raged until 461. Most historians see a general autonomistic movement in the 460s, with the heavily taxed citizens rejecting tyrannical state-formation, forced relocation, and mercenary armies. By 461 a "common agreement" (*koinon dogma*) had been reached, and Sicily had returned to position 5S. One consequence of this retreat in state powers was Douketios' creation of an autonomous Sicel state in the 450s (Asheri 1992: 161-65), and a likely increase in the centralization of the Elymians living around Segesta (Anello 1997).

A more democratic citizen regime controlled Syracuse for the rest of the fifth century. We know so little about it that we cannot really say whether it abandoned the tyrants' interest in moving to 3S or 1S. Diodorus (12.30) says that the democracy built 100 new triremes and expanded the land army in 439 because it planned "to subdue all Sicily little by little." He adds that the Syracusans laid heavier tribute on the Sicels to fund their expansion, and after Douketios' death in 440 they absorbed much of the indigenous population of west-central Sicily. As noted above, by the 430s Syracuse had moved far enough back toward 4S to make Leontinoi seek an Athenian alliance, and war that broke out in 427 seems to have been largely against the Syracusan democracy's plans to move toward 4S. The speech that Thucydides (4.60) gives to Hermocrates at the Congress of Gela suggests that by 424 the Athenian threat had forced Syracuse to accept 5S.

After 413, Syracuse sent small detachments to the Aegean (Thucydides 8.26, 28, 84; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.2.8, 10; Diodorus 13.34), but not enough to suggest a serious ambition to play a role on this stage. In any case, the Carthaginian invasion of 409 put paid to Syracusan thoughts about anything other than avoiding 7S. If Diodorus (13.43) is correct about Hannibal's attempt to isolate Selinus diplomatically before going to war, Carthage had no serious interest in outcome 7S in 410, but the ease of the victory over Selinus may have given the Carthaginians grander ambitions. Hannibal spent 408 and 407 building up his forces before a new attack in 406, and even sought an Athenian alliance against Syracuse (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 123 = Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 92). The treaty that

Carthage and Syracuse signed in 405 (Diodorus 13.114) penned Syracuse into southeast Sicily, and looking weaker than at any time since 485.

Then still in his mid-twenties, Dionysius made his reputation by prosecuting Syracuse's generals (Diodorus 13.91; Aristotle, *Politics* 1305 a 26). Revisionist English-language historians have tried to compensate for the strong anti-Dionysian bias in the sources (e.g., Diodorus 14.66; Sanders 1987), but there is no reason to doubt Diodorus' statement (13.96) that Dionysius was seeking a tyranny as early as 406. He gained enough power to redraw the map of Syracuse, apparently as much to protect himself against the citizens as to prepare for a new war with Carthage (Diodorus 14.7). He carried out a major redistribution of land (Plato, *Seventh Letter* 347b; Plutarch, *Dion* 37), and—according to Diodorus (14.18)—conscripted 60,000 free men to extend the city's walls in 401. In 399, he raised vast sums of money so that he could hire mercenaries, build 160 new ship sheds, refit his 110 triremes, and build 200 new ships, including quadriremes. His technicians invented quinqueremes and war catapults (Diodorus 14.41-44). His first step was a gradual reassertion of Syracusan power in eastern Sicily, in defiance of the treaty with Carthage (Diodorus 14.14-17). Soon after 400 Syracuse was moving back toward 4S; David M. Lewis (1994: 140) suggests that Dionysius' plan, accomplished largely through forced relocations, was that "There would be a great Syracuse, and not much else in the way of Greek towns."

Diodorus (14.47) says that in 397 Dionysius demanded that Carthage surrender all the Greek cities in Sicily, apparently aiming at 3S, and then attacked with an army of 83,000 men. The course of the struggle is unclear. After sacking Motya in 397 Dionysius apparently had to disband most of his army (Diodorus 14.78), and in 396 gave up trying to expel Carthage from Sicily so that he could concentrate on Messana (strategy 4S). Diodorus has Himilco of Carthage put Syracuse under siege in 396, only to give up because of outbreaks of plague and a great revolt in Libya. A Carthaginian offensive with 80,000 troops through the center of the island ran out of steam, and Dionysius fought several campaigns against Messana and its Carthaginian allies, as well as provoking fears on the Italian mainland; then, according to Diodorus (14.96), a treaty was concluded in 392 on the same terms as that of 405. This would imply a return to position 5S. Caven (1990: 130-31) suggests that such terms would in fact represent a Syracusan victory, in that Carthage accepted the impossibility of moving to position 7S, but most historians think that Diodorus was confused.

The wars with Carthage left Dionysius as unchallenged tyrant. An Athenian inscription of 394/3 calls him *archon* of Sicily (Tod 1948: no. 108 = Harding 1985: no. 20), and in a pamphlet probably written in the 390s Lysias (6.6) classed him as a *basileus*. In the 380s Dionysius fought on the Italian mainland (including finally sacking Rhegium, trying to build a bridge across the straits, and raiding Pyrgi), intervened in the Aegean to support Sparta and the King's Peace, founded a colony in Illyria, and in 383 began a new war with Carthage. Diodorus (15.15) says this was because he saw a chance to detach discontented cities from the Carthaginian alliance, and that the only terms Dionysius would offer involved a complete Carthaginian withdrawal from Sicily. This implies a war aim of 3S, but we should note that Diodorus relates the entire multi-year war under the heading of 383, and generally seems ill-informed. The war apparently ended (in 374?) with the restoration of the *status quo ante* and Dionysius paying an indemnity of 1000 talents (Diodorus 15.17).

Dionysius definitely wanted to act on a supra-Sicilian stage; in the late 370s he renewed his interventions in Greece, even signing an alliance with Athens in 368 (Tod 1948 no. 133 = Harding 1985: no. 52), and began a new war with Carthage in the same year. But these actions do not look like efforts to move Syracuse to position 2S or 1S. The largest force he sent to Greece was twenty ships and 2000 mercenaries (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.1.20-22, 28-32) in 369-368, and his attack on Pyrgi was an attempt to raise cash for his Carthaginian war (Diodorus 15.14; [Aristotle], *Oeconomica* 2.2.20). Probably from 397 onward Dionysius hoped to reach 3S, driving Carthage out of Sicily and getting control of at least the southern parts of Magna Graecia. But we know of no attempts to restructure Sicilian society comparable to what the Athenians did in the fifth-century Aegean (Caven 1990: 000). A. M. Andreades (1933: 122) suggested on the basis of [Aristotle], *Oeconomica* 2.2.20 that Dionysius established a two-stater poll tax, but in fact the passage speaks only of a ruse through which the tyrant tricked each citizen out of two staters. [Aristotle] does, however, allude to Dionysius taxing animal husbandry so heavily that Syracusans gave up the activity (leading, of course, to another money-grubbing trick by the tyrant), and Diodorus (14.106) says that when Dionysius transplanted the Caulonians to Syracuse in 389, he gave them five years' exemption from taxation. However, we do not know whether this refers to direct taxes that Syracusan citizens otherwise had to pay, or to the kind of indirect taxes found in every Greek state. Possibly Dionysius created a system of direct taxation, but the evidence is unclear. And after his innovations in Syracuse before 397, Dionysius seems to have fallen back on Gelon's twin strategies of mercenaries and relocations. He planted no fewer than fourteen settlements of former mercenaries to control potentially or actively hostile Greek and Sicel populations, but frequently lost control of them, particularly in the case of Campanians (Demand 1990: 98-105). In 404 a group of Campanians massacred the men of Entella and took their wives for themselves, and then resisted all Dionysius' attempts to subdue them (Diodorus 14.9, 48, 53, 61). As late as the 280s Entellan epigraphy remained distinctly Italic (*SEG* 30.1117-23; 32.914; 35.999).

In the 350s Syracusan state power collapsed even more abruptly than it had done a century earlier. This was part of a larger demographic crisis in Sicily. Diodorus (16.7) says that in 358 the city of Naxos was in ruins, and Plutarch describes Sicily in 354 as *apolis*, "without cities" (*Timoleon* 1). Syracuse was probably a city of at least 50,000, so we should not take this literally. Plutarch also claims that by 344 horses grazed in the agora at Syracuse, wild animals had taken over other cities, and men who possessed fortified towers took refuge in them, ignoring civic authorities (*Timoleon* 23). Archaeological evidence supports also points to rapid population decline (Wilson 1981/82; 1987/88). In Syracuse, civil wars broke out and merged with class wars in the 350s-340s as a series of bandit chiefs seized control of the city. Dionysius II, the "legitimate" tyrant, fortified the island of Ortygia against his own citizens, and bands of unemployed mercenaries devastated the city and its hinterland. Sicily suddenly returned to 5S, and a Carthaginian invasion in 345 threatened a final move to 7S. Timoleon's arrival in 344 prevented that, and by 338 he had beaten Carthage. His army in these campaigns rarely numbered above 10,000 men, in contrast to Dionysius' huge forces fifty years earlier. He then brought at least 60,000 immigrants to Syracuse and Camarina, and more to Acragas and Gela (Athanas, *FGrH* 562 F 2; Sordi 1961; Talbert 1974).

A last episode of expansion came under Agathocles, who seized power in 316 and set about moving Syracuse back to 3S (Consolo Langher 1979a; 1979b). Exiles from the towns Agathocles captured drew Carthage into the struggle in 312 by raising the specter of a Dionysius-like conquest of the entire island. Hamilcar won a great victory in 310 and put Syracuse under a particularly tight siege. Agathocles then invaded Africa, apparently less in the hope of capturing Carthage than that a threat at home would cause Hamilcar to abandon the siege of Syracuse (Diodorus 20.3). In this he was successful, although by 307 his African army had been destroyed. When peace was concluded in 305 Agathocles still ruled eastern Sicily, and Acragas was his only serious rival. He was the first Sicilian formally to take the title *basileus* (Diodorus 20.54), and Karl Meister (1984: 406) argues that between 300 and his death in 288, “he clearly aimed to consolidate the entire forces of the western Greek world under his hegemony for the planned new confrontation with Carthage.” If in 310 he invaded Africa to preserve 3S or 4S, by the 290s he was pursuing 3S as a prelude to 1S, even concluding diplomatic marriages with the Ptolemies and Demetrios the Besieger.

As in the 460s and again in the 350s, the tyrant’s death allowed the Sicilian Greeks to move rapidly back toward 5S in the 280s (Consolo Langher 1996). Syracuse was still the greatest power when Rome intervened in 264, but was thereafter forced to accept 7S. In 212, Rome sacked Syracuse, and in 209 destroyed Acragas, the last independent Greek city in Sicily.

## 7.2 *Equilibria*

Through much of the fifth century, Athens and Syracuse made serious efforts to move to level 3 in the typology sketched above, and on occasion even attempted to reach levels 2 and 1. Syracuse made even more strenuous efforts in the fourth century. Yet the outcome of all their struggles was the collapse of Athens to level 5A (and briefly even 6A) in 404, with only a faint revival in 378 before reaching 7A in 338; and the collapse of Syracuse to level 5S in the 460s, 350s, and 280s, before being reduced to 7S in the 260s.

Was this outcome inevitable? In the most sophisticated treatment of Greek state-formation known to me, Gary Runciman (1989: 326-36; 1990) answers yes, concluding that the classical city-state was an evolutionary dead-end. He defines “A dead-end [as a situation] 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)

I think that Runciman is mistaken. I suggest that this is partly because he does not define his own counterfactual assumptions clearly enough, and partly because he operates with broad ideal types not suited to the particularity of the question.

First, the appropriate counterfactual. John Haldon (1993: 33) has emphasized that “The stage of evolution of states must ... be borne in mind when making comparisons.” Comparing the venerable, deeply rooted Byzantine Empire of the tenth through twelfth centuries with the fledgling Ottoman “state” of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as Haldon does, would be highly misleading if we did not make allowances for these differences in developmental stages. Yet Runciman compares the classical city-states with Rome, Byzantium, and Venice at the height of their glory, and concludes that because fifth-century poleis were not like these powers, they could not have turned into anything like them. But Rome was not built in a day: its ingenious system of incorporating defeated enemies evolved over centuries. Even if we start the Roman clock only with the establishment of the Republic in 509, by the time that Rome’s manpower broke Carthage, the system had been developing for a quarter of a millennium. Runciman seems to have assumed that because historians insist on calling fifth-century Athens an empire, then empires are the appropriate analytical category. I argued above that state-formation is a much better description of the processes at work in the classical Aegean and Sicily. The appropriate comparison for fifth-century Athens (were it not so obscure) would be sixth- or fifth-century BC Rome, locked in life-and-death struggles with its ethnically similar Latin neighbors. The origins of the Byzantine Empire (see Haldon, this vol.) were so completely different from those of expansionist city-states like Athens, Syracuse, and Rome that this comparison obscures more than it reveals.

Rather than comparing a city-state in the process of centralizing power and expanding the area under its control with mature, multiethnic empires, we need to revert to the typology I set out at the start of section 7. This forces us to make explicit a range of counterfactuals. We should begin by asking not why no Greek city became the Roman Empire, but why none moved to level 3, reducing the Aegean or Sicilian Greeks to a territorial state under its control. There is no point in worrying about levels 2 and 1 unless we first show that advancing to 3 is a plausible counterfactual.

### *7.2.1. The Athenian equilibrium and its limits*

Runciman argues that the small city-state of equal male citizens was an excellent evolutionary response to the problems of the archaic period, but then “stuck fast” while the larger Mediterranean context continued to change. Social scientists often describe such situations as a “lock in,” as in Paul David’s classic study of the QWERTY keyboard (David 1985). Typewriters were originally laid out in a counterintuitive way to prevent typists from getting the keys moving so fast that the machines jammed. As technology developed, this ceased to be a problem; but by then a generation of typists had learned a particular layout and an industry had developed to train them in using it. David defines lock-in as

the entry of a system into a trapping region—the basin of attraction that surrounds a locally (or globally) stable equilibrium. When a dynamic economic system enters such a region, it cannot escape except through the intervention of some external force, or shock, that alters its configuration or transforms the underlying structural relationships among the agents. (David 2000)

I argued in section 6.3 that the Aegean entered such a “trapping region” in the late sixth century, with Spartan diplomatic/military domination of the Peloponnese, a multitude of smaller city-states to the north and east, and large, loose, and occasionally effective states further north still. This equilibrium was shattered in 480 by the shock of the Persian War, which altered the structural relationships among the agents. By 478 there was no way back to the sixth-century trapping region, and, I argued in section 6.3, the path down which the war had pushed the Aegean made an Athenian league (outcome 4A) a new locally stable equilibrium. The Ionians’ and islanders’ cooperation allowed Athens to concentrate enough capital and coercion to make this into a trapping region in the 470s. Once this had happened, Runciman’s basic claim—that the Greek city-states were stuck fast at level 5, as autonomous poleis—was already falsified. We must therefore redefine his question, asking instead whether the collapse of Athens and Syracuse back from level 4 to level 5 was inevitable, and why they did not move up from level 4 to levels 3, 2, and 2.

I suggest that the new post-478 equilibrium was every bit as stable (or “sticky”) as that of the late sixth century. Athenian disasters in Egypt in 454 and Boeotia and Euboea in 447/6 could not shock the system out of this equilibrium; even that of 413 did not destabilize the system enough. In each case the Aegean was rocked, but then settled down back at some version of position 4A. Only a blunder on the scale of 405 could so rearrange the underlying structural relationships that the Aegean returned to 5A. Runciman’s question of why Athens did not become Rome, Byzantium, or Venice is too crude: we need to ask why the equilibrium at 4A collapsed. I suggest that contrary to Runciman’s general thesis, this was anything but inevitable.

Counterfactual analysis is again the best way to explore this question. In section 6.3 I looked at a series of possible branching worlds in the Aegean from 490 to the 430s. Here I want to look at two more.

#### *415 BC*

Could the Sicilian expedition either have succeeded or at least avoided disaster? Thucydides (2.65) makes it clear that the invasion was not doomed to failure, but then in book 6 shows us the Athenians piling blunder upon blunder, from the ambassadors’ failure to see through Segesta’s lies to Nicias’ miscalculation that encouraged the Assembly to double the expedition’s size. The mutilation of the herms, profanation of the Mysteries, and the subsequent witch-hunt that threw Athens into confusion were surely avoidable; so too the maneuvers leading to Alcibiades’ flight to Sparta. Had the armada followed Alcibiades’ or Lamachus’ plans, it might have taken Syracuse quickly or avoided entrapment. Once it landed, it came close to succeeding on a number of occasions. Had Nicias pursued the siege more vigorously, Syracuse might have been cut off before Gylippos arrived. Had the Athenians not become disoriented in the night battle of the heights of Epipolai, all might yet have been saved. Had Nicias worried less about omens and beaten a retreat from Syracuse when he had the chance, at least some of his troops might have made it back to Athens. Any of these things could have happened differently. Reading Thucydides’ account is an agonizing experience. His unforgiving prose takes us into the muddy bed of the Assinaros as men trampled each other to drink the water made foul with their own blood, while the Syracusans rained death down on

them. Surely this should not have happened: like the Athenians themselves (Thucydides 8.1), we cannot believe that such a thing is possible.

This was the greatest Hellenic action that took place during this 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 sufferings were on an enormous scale; 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)

It was a close-run thing, lost by bad luck and poor decisions, both on the battlefield and back in Athens. If things had gone slightly differently, and the city had fallen, there is every reason to expect that most of Sicily would have gone over to Athens. Gylippos certainly thought so: when he heard a rumor in the summer of 414 that Syracuse had been taken before he arrived, he “abandoned all hope for Sicily, and wishing to save Italy, rapidly crossed the Ionian Sea to Taras” (Thucydides 6.104).

Alcibiades thought that capturing Sicily would provide enough of a shock to jolt Athens out of equilibrium 4A to 2A, and that a subsequent attack on Carthage would move it to 1A. But here we run into a major second-order counterfactual. In the real world, the Segestans, terrified after the failure of their plan to have Athens counterbalance Selinus, talked Carthage into intervening in 410 (Diodorus 13.43). If Athens had won, Segesta would have had no need to seek new allies, leaving Athens free to mobilize Sicilian manpower and resources for a decisive blow in the Aegean. But we have no way to know whether Carthage would have attacked anyway, out of fear of Athens’ presence, or to grab Selinus or Acragas. We can only guess wildly at what would have happened if Athens and Carthage had clashed, but judging from Syracuse’s inability to dislodge the Carthaginians, Athens could well have been no better off after taking Syracuse than they would have been if they had never attacked (though they would presumably have been much better off than they really were in 413/12).

If Carthage had not attacked, or had negotiated a *modus vivendi* with a victorious Athens, the possibility also remains that the spoils of war would have been less useful than the Athenians had hoped. Even before the outbreak of the Carthaginian war in 409, the Sicilians sent only 22 ships to the Aegean (Thucydides 8.26; Diodorus [13.34] says 35). Athens could presumably have raised hoplites from the Chalcidians in Sicily and levied tribute, but it is far from clear that these results would have proved immediately decisive in the Aegean. Momentous as the fall of Syracuse would have been, I suggest that it probably would not have shocked the Aegean out of 4A. If the Athenians could have kept the Sicilian cities under control—by no means certain—and have avoided a potentially ruinous war with Carthage—also by no means certain—Sicily’s resources would, though, have accelerated their longer-term movement toward 2A.

#### 405 BC

Aegospotamoi seems to have been an entirely avoidable disaster. Had Athens accepted a negotiated settlement in 410 or 406, it would of course not have happened. But even absent a diplomatic solution, there was no need for the loss of the fleet. Xenophon (*Hellenica* 2.1.25-27) tells us that by a cruel irony, Alcibiades’ home in exile was within

sight of where the Athenians beached their fleet. There were good reasons for the Athenians to choose Aegospotamoi as a base of operations (Strauss 1988), but it had no town to sell food to them. Alcibiades warned the Athenian generals that they should move to Sestos, just two miles away, where they could find all the supplies they needed, instead of scattering in foraging parties every day. “The generals, however—particularly Tydeus and Menander—told him to go away,” Xenophon says. “‘We are in command now,’ they said, ‘not you.’ So Alcibiades went away.” The very next day, Lysander captured almost all the Athenian ships as they lay on the beach, unguarded (on the source problems, see Strauss 1983).

Once the fleet was lost, Sparta could cut off Athenian grain supplies. Defeat was then as inevitable as anything gets in war. But, though no one at the time knew it, had the Athenians avoided Aegospotamoi, their situation was about to improve drastically. Kagan (1987: 419) is surely correct that the civil war that broke out between Cyrus and Artaxerxes when their father Darius II died in the spring of 404 would have disrupted Persian support for Sparta. Egypt rebelled in 404, and remained outside the Persian Empire for the next sixty years. Had the Athenian generals listened to Alcibiades, Sparta’s naval effort would probably have collapsed in 403. Had the Athenian Empire survived 404, there is no reason to think that it would have faced any serious problems in the next decade. Indeed, Xenophon in 399 and Agesilaos in 395 showed how vulnerable the western Persian Empire was to Greek military technology, and it might have been much harder for the Persians to subvert an Athenian attack on Anatolia or involvement in Egypt in the 390s by paying other Greeks to rebel than it was for them to do this to Sparta in 394. Second-order counterfactuals again complicate the issues, but at the very least, Persia’s problems would have reduced Sparta’s ability to prevent Athens’ centralization of resources in the Aegean. At the other extreme, we could imagine that as the western satraps freed themselves from central control, culminating in the Satraps’ War of the 360s, they might have seen Athens as an obvious ally. Alternatively, Persia might have supported Sparta through the 380s and 370s as it did in the real world, dragging out the Peloponnesian War. But by the 370s other forces were coming into play.

Demography was running against Sparta. As noted in section 5.2, by about 370 Sparta scarcely had 1000 hoplites to put into the field. Spartan power was a brittle shell; a single defeat at Leuctra in 371 shattered it forever. Thebes, Corinth, and Sparta’s other fifth-century friends would probably have remained loyal if Athens had still been a major power in the 370s, but it is hard to see Sparta maintaining a credible threat to Athens by the second quarter of the fourth century. Perhaps Thebes would have taken over its role, but for all the city’s fourth-century successes (Buckler 1979), it never seems to have come close to the kind of power at the Athenian Empire’s disposal.

At the risk of letting cotenability spiral out of control, I close this section by asking how Athens’ relationship with Syracuse might have developed had Athens failed in 415-413 but avoided defeat in 404. If Syracuse’s war with Carthage had followed its actual course in such a world, Athens would have had little to fear from Dionysius I in the 390s, but more in the 380s. Perhaps he would have sent more than the twenty ships he did in 387 (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.1.26); but on the other hand, he might equally well have been willing to accept an Athenian alliance well before the real one of 368. Syracuse never intervened in the Aegean in any significant way, and there is no reason to think that it could have done so had Athens survived 404. And as in the case of Sparta,

we should pay attention to long-term demographic trends. Sicily collapsed in the 350s: it could easily have been a hostile Athens rather than a sympathetic Timoleon who landed in 344.

Everything could have been running Athens' way in the early fourth century. Persia was in chaos, Egypt in revolt, Syracuse and Carthage locked in a life-and-death struggle, and Spartan manpower descending below the critical threshold of viability. Had the Athenian generals not thrown away the fleet at Aegospotamoi, I conclude, the Athenian Empire would not have fallen in 404, 394, or, for that matter, in 384. Rather, Athens would have resumed the process of state-formation after Darius II's death, stabilizing at 4A, and renewing the movement toward 3A in an increasingly favorable environment. I suspect that by the 370s Pericles' predictions would have come true, and Sparta would not have been able to resist the Athenians' concentration of capital and coercion. If I am correct in this, then it is even harder to see Persia in the 360s and Sicily in the 350s as serious obstacles to an Athenian breakthrough to 2A and even 1A.

### 7.2.2. *The Sicilian equilibria and their limits*

If we can describe the Aegean as entering a trapping region in 478/7, from which it was very difficult to dislodge Athens, we can describe Sicily as oscillating between two unstable equilibria around 5S and 4S (Fig. 4.5). The system came close to 3S in the 380s and around 300, but never quite got there; close to 6S in 415-414; and close to 7S in 406, 396, and 316, before reaching it in the First Punic War.

It seems to me that there were ten major differences between Sicily and the Aegean. The first four of these favored a Syracusan breakthrough; the second six worked against it. In combination, they produced a highly unstable situation.

- 1) As a colonial society, Sicily was more fluid than the Aegean, particularly its citizenship structures. Territorial expansion into areas considered non-Greek continued through the classical period, and there was a sense of an open frontier. There were limits to this fluidity, of course, and after the fall of each Syracusan dynasty those Sicilians who had been forcibly relocated were generally eager to return to their ancestral homes. But the contrast with the closed world of the Aegean remains strong.
- 2) The Sicilian tyrants were more autonomous from civil society than any government in the Aegean.
- 3) Syracuse was tremendously wealthy (Wescoat 1989). Athens was probably richer still, but Syracuse's agricultural potential was vastly greater (De Angelis 2000), and it had a huge hinterland into which population could expand.
- 4) Efficient mercenary troops were readily available, particularly in Campania and Iberia.
- 5) Sicily never experienced anything quite like the Persian Wars and the consensus of 478/7 about the need for Athenian leadership. There were great crises in 480, 415-413, 406-405, 396, and 316-307, but in no case did all or even most Sicilian Greeks accept Syracuse. The general hostility toward tyranny worked to make it harder for Sicilian Greeks to swallow their differences in the face of a hostile imperialist as the Aegean Greeks had done in 478/7. For example, in 398 "although [the Greeks] hated

the tyranny of Dionysius, they were still glad to join in the war against the Carthaginians because of the cruelty of that people” (Diodorus 14.46). On this occasion many Sicilians were prepared to work with Dionysius, but this was a decidedly shaky basis for state-formation, and did not outlive the immediate crisis. Even when Syracuse had a democratic regime, there was enormous suspicion, as in 415, when the best it could get was benevolent neutrality. When Syracuse sent twenty ships to the Aegean in 412, only Selinus (presumably because of Athens’ support for Segesta) joined in, sending just two ships (Thucydides 8.26). This lack of legitimacy meant that Syracuse had to compel other states to submit, rather than getting their voluntary agreement and then only having to prevent them from rebelling, as in the Aegean. This meant more war and higher costs.

- 6) Syracuse apparently never created a resource base like the Athenian tribute system, or centralized legal and political functions beyond moving the populations of defeated cities to Syracuse itself and planting new towns of mercenaries. Dionysius I may have imposed more direct taxes on the Syracusans than the Athenians did on themselves, but there is no clear evidence for this.
- 7) Syracuse could only meet the vast expenses of its wars by extraordinary financial measures. In 481 and 398, the tyrants raised huge loans. A single battle settled the first of these wars, and generated enormous plunder; but despite the loot that Dionysius won in 397, he had to reduce his forces significantly in 396. In that year’s crisis he ended up being so desperate for mercenaries that he told Polyxenos to pay whatever rates he had to (Diodorus 14.62). In a world in which international finance was poorly developed, it was difficult for Syracuse to sustain war in the way that Athens was able to do.
- 8) The expense of mercenaries, ships, and the standing costs that fell more heavily on tyrannies than democracies or oligarchies (Aristotle, *Politics* 1311 a 6-22; Andreades 1933: 114-20) produced constant fiscal crises in Syracuse. This forced the tyrants to resort to predatory methods, raising transaction costs and depressing economic activity. Their inability to pay their mercenaries led to civil wars, revolutions, and roving bands of ex-soldiers, who were virtually out of control by the 340s.
- 9) Syracuse’s wealth did not overshadow that of other Sicilian cities by as much as Athens’ did in the Aegean. Fifth-century Acragas was particularly rich (e.g., Diodorus 13.81-84), and while Acragas seems not to have been a serious challenger to Syracuse, the Deinomenids’ success depended heavily on their alliance with Theron. Rhegion was a constant problem until Dionysius I destroyed it in 387, and Carthage was readier than Persia to go to war with the Greeks.
- 10) As noted in section 5.2 above, in ancient Greece population growth correlates closely with state-formation, and demographic decline with the breakdown of authority. In Sicily (but not the Aegean) in the fourth century, population collapsed to crisis levels by the 340s, and it is tempting to associate the beginning of this with the Carthaginian plagues around 400 BC. The demographic tide was running against Dionysius I.

The collapses of Syracusan state power in the 460s, 350s, and 280s were not like Athens’ collapse in 404. Syracuse was simply unable to sustain the financial burden of moving toward level 3S, and in trying to do so, it brought on its own collapse. Even if Dionysius had taken Eryx and Segesta in 397/6, or Agathocles had sacked Carthage in 309, I

suspect that things would have turned out much the same. Similarly, if Carthage had won at Himera in 480, or had sacked Syracuse in 405, 396, the 340s, or 317, it might well have immediately triggered the next anti-tyrannical uprising and collapse of Syracusan state power. But there is no sign that the Carthaginians ever seriously intended to move to 7S. They preferred installed a pro-Carthaginian tyrants to long-term occupation of Greek cities for any length of time. Linda-Marie (1983: 107) suggests that we should see the Carthaginian policy toward the Greeks as a continuation of politics by other means. Carthage lacked the population base to become a true imperial power, and seems always to have concentrated on expansion of trade rather than state-building (Lancel 1995: 110-42). Diodorus tells us that in 397

no small number of Carthaginians had their homes in Syracuse and rich possessions, and many also of their merchants had vessels in the harbor loaded with goods, all of which the Syracusans plundered. Similarly the rest of the Sicilian Greeks drove out the Phoenicians who dwelt among them and plundered their possessions. (Diodorus 14.46)

The Carthaginians, on the other hand, not only did not slaughter the Greeks living in their city (presumably as traders), but made them priests when the city was besieged by rebels in 396 (Diodorus 14.77). The difference in attitudes is probably symptomatic of the different orientations of Carthage and Syracuse.

Sicily fits Runciman's model better than the Aegean, though even with Syracuse the question is not why the poleis failed to break out of the city-state mould, but why they failed to go from being regional territorial states to being panhellenic states and empires. Finances, state structures, demography, ideology, and the international environment all conspired to make Syracuse's task impossibly difficult. But in Athens, the unique events of the Persian Wars and the voluntary alliance of 478/7 set the Aegean on a path in which position 4A became a stable equilibrium, and gradual movement to 3A and beyond was perfectly possible.

### 7.3 *From state to empire*

I have argued that the predictable equilibrium state of the fifth-century Aegean was not 5A, as Runciman implies, but 4A, and that had Athens avoided defeat in 404, it *could* have developed into a multiethnic empire like Assyria, Persia, Rome, or Byzantium (1A). But *would* it have done so? Runciman thinks not. I am less confident that we can answer this question, since cotenability problems and second-order counterfactuals quickly spiral out of control. But it is worth looking briefly at three dimensions that Runciman (p. 000 above) identifies as trapping Athens at the city-state level—coercion, trade, and ideology—and what he sees as the underlying explanation, the Greek states' pervasive egalitarianism.

#### 7.3.1. *Coercion and manpower*

There are two ways to look at issues of Athenian manpower. First, we can consider the total number of Athenians relative to the tasks facing them. As noted on p. 000 above, there were about 350,000 people in Attica in the 430s BC, or about 10 percent of the total population of the Greek world; and perhaps a million in the Empire as a whole, or 30

percent of all Greeks. The population of the Spartan-Syracusan alliance of 413-409 probably outnumbered the Athenian Empire, but Carthage's intervention effectively split this axis. By 404 Attica's population had fallen by as much as a third from the level of the 430s, but the Empire as a whole probably still outnumbered any conceivable Greek alliance against it.

I will return to total numbers below, but this is probably not what Runciman means. He focuses on military manpower, asserting that Greek states looking to expand "were restricted by their failure to extend citizen roles to aliens (as Rome was later to succeed in doing)." Total manpower sometimes matters less than the manpower that can be effectively mustered for warfare. In fourth-century Sparta, property qualifications for citizenship and the growing concentration of land through upper-class endogamy all but wiped out the Spartiates, to the extent that a single defeat at Leuctra in 371 could paralyze the state. Rome, by contrast, perfected by 338 BC a generous approach to enrolling defeated enemies as allies and giving them at least partial access to citizenship, opening up the vast resources of manpower that allowed Rome to grind Carthage down in the third century. In the second century, though, Rome ran into new recruiting problems that were only resolved by opening up the army to landless *proletarii* after 107 and ultimately a hard war with the Italian allies in 91-89.

Thucydides recognized what we would call the Roman model as a perfectly legitimate type of state-formation. 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. Athens was notoriously ungenerous with its citizenship: John Davies (1977/78) speaks of a "paranoia" about the purity of the descent group and the need to restrict the benefits of the Empire and democracy to this group. These benefits included land ownership, voting, and state pay for office. This restriction most likely did limit the Athenians' ability to incorporate their subjects, acting as a brake on 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?

Before addressing these questions, I want to note that Cohen has recently argued that in fact historians have misinterpreted the key texts (Demosthenes 57; [Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 26, 42), and that the boundaries around the citizen body were quite permeable. Historians generally assume that [Aristotle] uses the word *astos*, “townsman,” as a synonym for *politês*, “citizen,” and that when he says that (following a Periclean law of 451/0) citizenship (*politeia*) belongs to those descended from *astoi* on both sides, he is describing a closed system of double endogamy. Cohen argues that in fact *astos* and *politês* meant different things, and that any Greek who moved to Attica could be considered an *astos*. “Routinely,” he suggests, “male offspring of *astoi* would have been presented to demesmen, and routinely accepted” (2000: 77). Consequently, Cohen concludes, the traditional double-endogamy model of the citizen body as a closed corporate descent group is merely a “shibboleth that Athenian *politai* constituted an impenetrable group of scions of *politai*, an autochthonous club sealed forever by doubly endogamous barriers, an unfounded interpretation in conflict with social, political, and historical realities” (Cohen 2000: 63).

It seems to me that insisting that [Aristotle] made a legalistic distinction between *astos* and *politês* is too rigidly philological; the traditional argument makes more sense of the texts, and is more consistent with the Athenians’ purges of interlopers from the citizen rolls. On the other hand, there would be little point to such purges unless Cohen is correct that some Greeks moved to Attica and insinuated themselves into the political community. But in any case, the most important issue for Runciman’s contrast with Rome is not individual immigrants to Attica but the enfranchisement of freed slaves and entire communities. Cohen (2000: 145) accepts that “liberation at Athens could not confer *politeia*,” and there are only two cases in which fifth-century Athens enfranchised all the free men of another polis. Both were for exceptional services: the Plataeans “had given themselves into the hands of the Athenians” (Herodotus 6.108) in the late sixth century and fought at Marathon. Some time before 427 were made full citizens (Thucydides 3.55, 63, 68; Demosthenes 59.104-106; Isocrates 12.94). The Samians received citizenship in 405 for their loyalty to Athens in its darkest days (*IG* i<sup>3</sup> 127 = Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 94 = Fornara 1983: no. 166).

This attitude is a long way from Republican Roman practices. But we should note that fifth-century Athens was the extreme case. As late as 507 many new citizens were enrolled at Athens (Aristotle, *Politics* 1275 b 34-37; *Constitution of Athens* 21). The boundaries hardened in the fifth century, perhaps in part because democracy and state-formation had increased the benefits flowing to citizens, though [Aristotle] (*Constitution of Athens* 26) says that Pericles promoted the double endogamy rule because the number of citizens had grown too much. In the third century, Athens began to be more generous with grants of citizenship, noticeably loosening its laws in 229/8 (M. J. Osborne 1981-83).

The Athenians were capable of opening up citizenship when they needed to. In the fifth century they felt no such a need. They had enough Athenian citizens to administer the state, and adding more would only spread the spoils thinner. They also had enough actual men to fill their phalanxes and ships, regularly drawing on troops from the

subject cities (section 6.1.1.b above), and using slaves as rowers (Hunt 1998: 83-101). In a well known passage, Thucydides (1.142-43) mentions the use of foreign rowers in the fleet, and defines the vital ingredient in Athenian coercive power: money. So long as Athens remained a center of concentrated capital, it seems to have had no trouble raising all the manpower it needed. Even in 411, after the shattering losses in Sicily, Athens called forth 15,000-20,000 rowers at half the usual wages to man 108 ships (Kagan 1987: 214-15). There was little to gain by opening up citizenship: what mattered most in the fifth century was keeping the tribute flowing. The Empire's military technology, institutions, large taxable population, and relatively highly developed trade set the level of Athens' coercive power.

Had Athens survived 404, overcome Sparta, then tried to move to 1A by conquering Persia or Carthage, that situation would presumably have changed. Vastly more manpower would have been needed, and these grand schemes of conquest might not have been possible without a shift to a Roman-type system. Would Athens have been willing to do this, or would it have stagnated at 1A or 2A, finally being crushed by Rome? The fact that Athens did relax its constraints in the third century suggests to me that given statesmen talented enough to identify the bottleneck, Athens was capable of widening its citizenship or in some other fashion co-opting its subjects.

### 7.3.2. *Trade and wealth*

Runciman suggests that "economically, [Greek states] were restricted by their failure to expand beyond small-scale trade and commerce (as Venice was later to succeed in doing)." Here, I think, he rested his argument on faulty scholarship. Athens was not Venice, of course. The east Mediterranean markets it dominated were far smaller than the European, Byzantine, and Arab trade routes that Venice controlled in the late Middle Ages (see Haldon, this vol.). But Runciman seriously underestimated the scale of commercial trade in classical Greece.

Runciman assumed that

It now seems to be generally accepted that what may be called the Weber-Hasebroek-Finley view of the ancient Greek economy is broadly correct—that is, that the *poleis* had no economic policies as such and that their economic institutions, such as they were, were inextricably bound up with and subordinated to their political institutions (and attitudes). (Runciman 1990: 351).

But this is no longer the case (if it ever was). Cohen (1992: 191-201) has convincingly argued that what the Athenians called the "invisible" (*aphanês*) economy of banking, trade, and commerce was very large; indeed, to have maintained themselves at the standards that we know they did, the richest Athenians must have been extensively committed to it. Daniel Jew (1999) has calculated that nearly half the wealth generated in fourth-century Athens must have come from gains in trade, and Alain Bresson (2001) has gathered an impressive array of evidence for the prominence of market-based trade and commerce.

The study of Athenian trade, and particularly its quantification and location in a larger model of the economy, remains in its infancy. But Fig. 4.6 (based on Parker 1992, with the addition of two eighth-century Phoenician wrecks found in 1999: 000), showing

the numbers of known Mediterranean shipwrecks, may be a useful starting point. The number of archaic wrecks climbs from two in the eighth century to four in the seventh and twenty in the sixth, then doubles to forty in the fifth, and forty-five in the fourth. The classical figures are far smaller than the 185 first-century BC wrecks. But we should bear in mind that largely as a result of the history of underwater excavation 70 percent of all wrecks come from the west Mediterranean, while classical Greek trade was concentrated in the east (diving has been particularly limited in Greek national waters). A conservative correction for this bias, adding 33 percent to the classical figures, would increase the fifth-century total to about 53 wrecks, or almost 30 percent of the first-century BC peak. First-century ships tended to be larger than those of the fifth century (although as noted in section 000, the Alonisos wreck was comparable with Roman trade vessels), so we might correct our estimate of fifth-century seaborne trade back down to 20 percent of that of the Late Republic. But this strikes me as being much more than “small-scale trade and commerce.”

As Jew suggests, gains from trade probably played a large part in Greek prosperity in the fifth century. I have argued (Morris, forthcoming) that standards of living rose steadily in Greece across the eighth through fourth centuries, and particularly sharply after 500. Classical Greece was, by ancient standards, a wealthy place, and the Athenian empire’s greatest achievement lay in capturing more of this wealth than anyone else. Unlike Syracuse, Athens was not undermined by financial crises. The costs of war in the 420s surprised the Athenians, but they adjusted. Even in 411, they found enough money to build a new fleet, and in 405/4 their problem was not that they could not afford to continue the war, but that they did not have time to build a new fleet before the Spartan siege starved them into surrender. Athens only extracted about half the resources per capita that Augustan Rome managed, but again we should remember that the appropriate comparison is not the empire of Augustus’ day, but the city-state of Coriolanus’. Given Athens’ financial success in the fifth century, I see no evidence to support Runciman’s assertion that Athens was locked into such small-scale commerce that it could not have afforded to move to 1A.

### 7.3.3. *Ideology*

Finally, Runciman suggests that “ideologically, [the Greek states] 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).” This is certainly true; I described Athens’ attempts to create religious bonds between the subject city and the capital in section 6.1.4.c above, and contrasted them with the powerful religious justifications for empire in Assyria and Persia in section 5.7. But once again there is a problem with the appropriateness of the comparisons.

Religious justifications of empire rest on and reinforce a sense of radical difference between the metropolitan society and those it would dominate. In classical Greece, religion was only one part of a larger notion of ethnic and cultural identity (Herodotus 8.144 is the *locus classicus*). Aegean Greeks clearly did feel a strong sense of ethnic difference in their wars against Persia, whether defensive or offensive. This was fundamental to the Ionians’ and islanders’ decision to accept Athenian leadership in 478/7, and the Persian Wars may indeed have been the turning point in the evolution of a distinctively Hellenic identity (E. Hall 1989). In the 440s Pericles (Plutarch, *Pericles* 17)

may even have proposed a new war with Persia as a way to bring the Greeks together. Sicilian Greeks had some of the same feelings when fighting Carthage, and in 406 and 397 were willing at least to cooperate with Syracuse. This sense of ethnic distance is central to the distinction I made in section 4.1 above between state-formation and imperialism. When looking at Athens' wars with Persia or Syracuse's with Carthage it may be useful to compare their ideological bases with those of the Byzantine or other empires. But when looking at Athens' state-building efforts after about 450, we are dealing with a much weaker sense of ethnic difference between friend and foe. The second type of ethnic identification is between groups within those peoples who defined themselves as Greek: most obviously, between Ionians and Dorians (J. Hall 1997: 51-65). Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse all appealed to this distinction in the fifth and fourth centuries, and Athens' religious propaganda rested heavily on it. We cannot measure its success accurately, but the willingness of Athens' subjects to join Dorian Sparta in the last phase of the Peloponnesian War suggests that it only provided a weak justification for the Greater Athenian state. Finally, we may note geographical distinctions, particularly that between Sicilian and Aegean Greeks. Syracuse appealed to these in 424 and 415, with enough success to keep potentially hostile cities neutral. It worked to some extent as a defensive ideology, but the absence of Sicilian contingents except for a small one from Selinus in the Sicilian force in 411 suggests that it was less successful as an offensive ideology.

The Athenians did not feel as different from the Dorians, and could not persuade their subjects to feel as different from the Dorians, as Greek of all kinds felt from the Persians. Athenian state-building lacked a strong ideological basis, but this is perhaps the norm in situations where an individual city-state is trying to form a single larger state out of a city-state system (e.g., Rome's wars with its Latin neighbors). The crucial issue here should be whether Athens, having survived the disaster of 404, could have generated enough ideological cohesion to make the leap from heading a Greek state to conquering a multiethnic empire like the Assyrian, Persian, Roman, or Byzantine. The obvious solution is to look at developments in the fourth century. These are ambiguous. Some Greeks were passionate about an anti-Persian crusade. Gorgias had raised the idea at Olympia in 408, and Lysias renewed it there in 384. In the meantime, Agesilaos had invaded Persia in 396, only to see other Greeks accept Persian money to fund a war which made him abandon his crusade; and a decade later Sparta let Persia dictate terms. Isocrates kept renewing the argument, beginning with his *Panegyricus* of 380, which unrealistically proposed that Athens should lead an invasion, which would be "more like a sacred mission than a military expedition" (Isocrates 4.180). In the *Archidamus*, written around 356, he suggested Spartan leadership, which was by now equally unrealistic; but in the *Address to Philip* of 346 he made a more sensible appeal for Macedonian command in such an ethnic-cultural crusade against Greece's natural enemies. Aristotle (*Politics* 1252 b 8) seems to have felt similarly, arguing that the Persians were slaves by nature, and advised Alexander to deal with them as he would with beasts (fragment 658 Rose).

In 336 the defeated Greek cities agreed to join Alexander in just such a crusade (Arrian, *History of Alexander* 1.1.2-3; Diodorus 17.4; Plutarch, *Alexander* 14), apparently greatly moved by a (perhaps staged) appeal from the Ephesians to free them from barbarian rule (Plutarch, *Moralia* 1126D). But actual Greek support for the war was

limited. Thebes and Athens pulled out in 335 at a rumor that Alexander had died. In 333, several of the Ionian cities that had been “liberated” by Alexander voluntarily returned to Darius’ Greek general Memnon, and Athens and almost the whole Cyclades were ready to revolt from Alexander. When Alexander did die, in 323, there was a general Greek uprising.

Should we conclude from this that anti-Persianism was a powerful defensive ideology in the 470s, an obsession of a few intellectuals in the 380s-340s, but no use at all in offensive wars of the 390s and 330s-320s? In 394, Corinth, Thebes, and Athens cared more about getting rid of Sparta than about overthrowing Persia or freeing the Ionians, and in the 330s some Greeks (most famously, Demosthenes) thought that the Macedonians were just as barbaric as the Persians, but closer at hand and more threatening. Athenian leadership might have made the transition to empire a more compelling cause, but the importance of the question is as unclear as its answer. Despite his near-total lack of a viable ideology of imperialism, Alexander overthrew Persia, and his Successors ruled over its fragments for a quarter of a millennium. Rome’s ideology of empire seems to have been no more coherent than Athens’. I suggest that if Athens had survived 404 and had been able to unite the other Greeks in an anti-Persian or anti-Carthaginian war, its shift to 1A would have gone more smoothly than if it had not been able to provide a convincing imperial ideology. But the Macedonian and Roman cases suggest that even without a powerful source of legitimation, if Athens had had the money, institutions, and military advantages it needed, the transition to 1A could still have taken place.

#### 7.3.4. *Egalitarianism*

After comparing the Greek city-states with Rome and Venice, Runciman asks

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 ruled out direct taxes on land, labor, and income. Even in oligarchies, pressure from the citizenry limited the concentration of power. There were 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)

I see two issues here. The first is conceptual: the Athenian Assembly was in a sense functioning as an oligarchic council when it took decisions about the subject cities, with birth rather than wealth defining membership. Herodotus (5.97) commented that it

was easier to fool 30,000 men than one, and the Roman and Venetian oligarchic councils were much smaller than Athens'. But Runciman does not provide any reasons why such a deliberative body should necessarily be unable to run an empire.

The second problem is empirical. Runciman operates with sweeping ideal types, but Greek egalitarianism was not static. The poleis around the shores of the Aegean and in the western colonies developed social structures something like those we see in the archaic and classical literary sources during the eighth century. Elitist aristocrats resisted the "middling ideology" of egalitarianism described in section 5.5 above through the seventh and sixth centuries, but in the late sixth century there was a further widespread shift toward "the middle" that made Greek-style democracy thinkable for the first time (Morris 1998b; 2000).

The fifth century was the zenith of the middling ideology and the power of the ordinary citizen. But this also 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 *phoros* probably did not fund the Parthenon (Kallet-Marx 1989), but if any of it did do so, then on Plutarch's interpretation (*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 tax on the cities to fund the power of the center.

Archaeological evidence suggests that civic egalitarianism was in retreat by about 425. 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 other sites by 375 (Morris 1992: 108-155; 1998b; Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994). The increase in elite spending on self-promotion was substantial: rich Athenians spent at least 400-500 talents on tomb-building during the Peloponnesian War (enough to keep 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, all states (whether under Athenian control or not) suddenly needed far more cash than before. In the absence of regularized taxation, this increased dependence 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 accelerated after 404, as military technology and costs advanced further, but no state had a tax base the size of the old Athenian Empire to meet the costs. Ste. Croix's classic (1953) argument that the rich

were more selfish after 404 than before is only partly true: they did insist more strongly on their right to dispose of their wealth as they chose, but did so in large part because they were shouldering more of the burden of financing the state.

Runciman is wrong to assert that a rigid egalitarianism blocked change. Class relations developed 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 Fig. 4.2, largely by promoting all Athenian citizens into a ruling elite and reducing the subject cities to the status of laterally insulated local communities within a larger polity. Had Athens survived 404, the financial burdens of fourth-century warfare might well have caused 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. Lisa Kallet (1994) has argued that financial specialists were doing just this in the fourth century. 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.

#### *7.4. Conclusion*

City-states tend to occur in clusters, and it is very rare for one state within such a cluster to concentrate so much coercive power that it can break out from to become the capital of an extensive territorial state. Robert Griffith and Carol Thomas (1981) even go so far as to argue that city-state systems have a “half-life,” gradually decaying until they are consumed by larger territorial states not based on the city-state model. But a few city-states, such as Rome, Ur under its Third Dynasty, Hammurabi’s Babylon, and Vijayanagara in medieval India do make the transition. In this section I have argued that there was nothing inevitable about the way history turned out in classical Greece: Athens could have become an extensive territorial state and even a multiethnic empire like the others in this book.

Conditions favored the emergence of small, autonomous city-states in the Greek world in the eighth century (level 5 in my typology), and a trend toward a smaller number of multi-city states in the fifth (level 4). The Greeks’ wealth, their military technology, and the external threats they faced all encouraged this development after 500. But very few of these formative states had the potential to develop further. For all its battlefield prowess, Sparta was structurally incapable of becoming the capital of a territorial state. It attained level 3 in the decade 404-394, only to slide back to level 5 by the 360s. Even Dionysius I could not quite get Syracuse to level 3 in Sicily, and his efforts to do so eventually led to a catastrophic collapse back to level 5 in the 350s. Athens was the only city-state that could conceivably have sustained level 3 and moved on to levels 2 and 1. This, I suggested, was largely because of the unique opportunity that came along in 478/7. The voluntary submission of the Ionians and islanders opened up a unique path of development in Greece. Only Athens had the financial and naval capital to exploit this situation.

A new equilibrium rapidly took shape, and proved extremely robust. Attempts to move to level 3 or higher led to severe shocks in 446 and 413, but neither of these was enough to jolt the Aegean out of the position it was locked into. Similarly, even had the

Athenians won more of their battles in Egypt and central Greece in the 450s, in the western mainland and Boeotia in the 420s, or even taken Syracuse in 415, I doubt that it would have broken the equilibrium in their favor. Only the catastrophe of 405 could do that. Once the Athenian grain supply was cut off, only a falling-out between Sparta and its allies could have prevented the fall of Athens and the break-up of the Empire. And once that break-up came, in 404, this path toward levels 3, 2, and 1 in Greece was permanently closed. No situation like 478/7 would come along again.

Athens lost the Peloponnesian War because of human error, not because of structural constraints. It did not have to happen. If the Athenian generals had shown better judgment at Aegospotamoi, and the Empire had held together for even another year, the international situation would have begun to shift in Athens' favor, as Persia ran into dynastic crises, Sparta into demographic decline, and Syracuse into both demographic and financial ruin. By the second quarter of the fourth century, I suggest, a Greater Athenian state that had avoided defeat in 404 would have been well placed to move toward 3A and 2A; by the middle of the fourth century, such a state would have stood a real chance of taking Persia's place as a great east Mediterranean multiethnic empire.

I draw two conclusions. First, Pericles was right: if the Athenians had been able to just sit and wait, as he had persuaded them to do since 446, protecting the tribute and extending the reach of the Athenian state into Aegean society, victory would ultimately have been theirs. It would have taken a long time, just as it took other empires a long time.

Second, Thucydides was also right: the Athenians defeated themselves. Whether, as he claims (2.65), they did so because democracy forced leaders to compete for popular support, is another question. But I can answer the question posed in this section as follows: the Athenian Empire did not become a major territorial empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome because of human error.

## **8. In the long run, how much did the failure of the Athenian Empire (and its competitor states) matter?**

If Athens had overcome Sparta, then Persia, then Carthage, and then even Rome, what would this have changed? I raise this question with some trepidation, because it violates Fearon's proximity principle (p. 000 above). Long-run predictions of what might-have-been are the kind of thing that has given counterfactual history a bad name. The possible second-order counterfactuals multiply beyond imagining, and it is tempting to conclude that one guess is as good as another. However, I do not think that this is quite true. Even when speculating about how the Mediterranean world might have looked half a millennium later if Athens had survived 404, we can apply certain general empirical rules about the plausibility of different scenarios, and reach some tentative conclusions about the long-run significance of the Empire's collapse.

I suggest that in the long run, most things would probably have turned out much the same. To have triumphed over its rival Mediterranean powers in the fourth and third centuries BC, Athens would have to have become much more like them, evolving (as Rome did) from a city-state with a lot of territory to the metropolis of a vast empire. The actual outcome, of course, was that Rome conquered the Mediterranean in the second and first centuries BC, shifting its economic and political center of gravity to Italy, only for

that center to shift back to the east Mediterranean by the sixth century AD. An Athenian Mediterranean Empire might have cut Italy out of this story (though probably not), but by about AD 500 the general distribution of power and resources might not have been so different. Nor, I suggest, would an Athenian Mediterranean Empire have dramatically altered the general economic development of this part of the world.

That said, there is one level at which substituting Athens for Rome and Constantinople would have mattered a very great deal. The subsequent development of classical literature, art, philosophy, and science would presumably have been very different without the tension between Rome and *Graecia capta*. The religious history of the Mediterranean—particularly the triumph of Christianity and Islam—may have followed completely other paths, making the world we live in a very different place.

I divide my comments into three categories.

### 8.1. *Sociopolitical evolution*

How much difference did 404 BC make to the long-term development of states and empires? We can pose this question in several ways. First, we might take the extremely high-level approach championed recently by Jared Diamond (1997). Diamond argues that at the end of the last Ice Age, around 11,000 BC, conditions in the “hilly flanks” of the fertile crescent were uniquely favorable to the domestication of wild grasses and large animals. This stimulated a shift toward higher population densities, sedentary lifestyles, the coevolution of human and animal microbes, more advanced technology, and the centralization of power. Once this had happened, Diamond suggests, this economic and social package spread inexorably through Eurasia along the same latitude. There was never any possibility of sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, or the New World developing competitor civilizations; the world was locked into a developmental path thirteen thousand years ago, and nothing that has happened since has shocked it out of that.

Diamond set out to challenge theories that claimed that a particular race or culture was inherently superior to others. The most popular form of this argument is the “Plato to Nato” model, normally based on the idea that a unique western civilization took shape in archaic and classical Greece, starting a developmental sequence that gave Europe a decisive edge over the rest of the world. This European tradition was set back by the Germanic invasions but re-emerged in the Renaissance, so that since the sixteenth century Europeans have gradually conquered the world. In this form, the argument is a legacy of the nineteenth century. It still flourishes in college textbooks, although scholarly versions of it now generally place Europe’s divergence from Asia in the Middle Ages (e.g., North and Thomas 1973; E. L. Jones 1987; 1988). If either version of this theory is broadly correct, then 404 BC was vastly more important than Diamond’s evolutionary model would have it. However, in the 1990s what Jack Goldstone (2000) has called the “California School” of comparative historians has argued that as late as AD 1750, the differences between Chinese and European demography, technology, and sociopolitical structures were small, and generally worked in China’s favor. What changed the world, Goldstone suggests (1998), was not long-term structural differences that might have been impacted by a different outcome in 404 BC, but a group of contingent events in late seventeenth-century England—a case of what Brian Arthur (1989) calls “lock-in by small historical events.” Again, we must conclude that in the very long-term, what happened in Greece in 404 BC matters relatively little.

But we might also put the question in a third way, defining the long term as one millennium rather than two-and-a-half. Would the distribution of power and wealth in the ancient Mediterranean have turned out very differently if Athens had broken through to a higher level of state- and empire-formation? Here there is much more to discuss, although I reach much the same conclusion as with the first two approaches: if Athens had broken through to become a larger state or empire, the Mediterranean would not have looked so different in the sixth century AD, or even in the first century AD.

Once again, proper analysis depends on specifying exactly what kind of counterfactual we want to propose. If we imagine Athens winning a later phase of the Peloponnesian War and moving to position 3A, or even overrunning Sicily and southern Italy to move to 2A, certain consequences logically follow. Philip of Macedon would have had a much tougher time dealing with the Greeks than he actually did. Indeed, if Thebes had been under Athenian control in 360, Philip might never have been sent back to dispute the throne. It seems likely that without a king of such charisma and ruthlessness, Macedon would have sunk deeper into anarchy (Hammond and Griffith 1979: 203-215), and probably would not have posed a serious threat to the poleis at this point. However, demographic, economic, and military trends were definitely working in favor of what Davies (1978: 228-53) calls “opportunists,” exceptional men who could by force of personality pull together large, loose semi-states like Thessaly, Macedon, Epirus, and Aetolia. Had Philip not overwhelmed the Greeks, possibly some other Macedonian would have done so. I do not want to fall back onto Engels’ notion of “substitute Napoleons,” in which we treat the great man as an expression of the forces of the age, such that someone would inevitably have come forward in this role. But the succession of fourth-century big men, from Jason through the Phocians, Philip, and Alexander to Pyrrhus, combined with the third-century prominence of the Achaean and Aetolian Leagues, suggests that the city-states would have faced a series of challengers.

How a Greater Athenian state would have fared against Philip or some substitute king, we can only guess. The disorganization of the Greek states certainly helped Philip, and a resolute Athenian stand at Olynthos in the late 350s might have ended his expansion. Given the plethora of potential foes and the growing strength of the city-states’ northern and western neighbors, I suspect that if Athens had survived 404 but remained at level 4A or 3A, something like Chaeronea might very well have happened in any case in the fourth or third century. An Epirote or Aetolian hegemony rather than a Macedonian one, coming in the third rather than the fourth century, might have led to very different outcomes with regard to the Persian Empire. But even if Persia had escaped a European invasion, or Athens had withstood its Balkan rivals, the east Mediterranean would still have been confronted by Roman power after 200 BC. There is no reason to suppose that any of the counterfactuals advanced here would have changed the outcome of that confrontation.

If Athens had survived 404 and managed to move to 2A, overcoming Syracuse, the resulting panhellenic state would presumably have been more able to withstand Balkan pressures in the fourth century, and might have blocked Roman expansion in southern Italy more effectively than Pyrrhus did in the 280s. The demographic balance between Italy and Greece swung far in Rome’s favor in the last three centuries BC (Brunt 1971; Alcock 1993). This might have been less pronounced had there not been such large-scale Greek migration to the Middle East after Alexander’s conquests, but the

continued demographic decline in Greece in the second and first centuries BC suggests that deeper ecological factors were also at work. Overall, I suspect that even if Athens had moved to 2A in the fourth century, by the first century BC Rome would still have achieved much the same dominance as it did in the real world.

If, as I suggested in section 7 is conceivable, the outcome of Athens surviving 404 would have been a shift to 1A, there are several branching counterfactuals to consider. If Athens had anticipated Alexander and overrun some or all of the weakened Persian Empire in the fourth century, I suspect that the medium-term consequence would have been that the transformation of the Athenian Empire into something very like the Hellenistic Kingdoms. If so, there would have been nothing to prevent Athens at 1A succumbing to Rome just as these Kingdoms did, and the Parthians infiltrating into Iran and Mesopotamia. By the second century BC, this counterfactual world would probably have come back quite close to the real one.

If Athens had also conquered Carthage, as some people hoped, this would have presented Rome with a very different set of challenges in the third century (or earlier). Possibly (a) Rome would still have won something like the Punic Wars, and then conquered the east Mediterranean; (b) there would have been a stalemate, dividing the Mediterranean into southeastern and northwestern empires; or (c) Athens would have got the upper hand and dominated or conquered Italy. Scenario (a) brings us back toward the real situation in the second and first centuries BC. The second two scenarios would have produced very different histories. The growing demographic weight and economic development of Italy might have meant that even under scenario (c), the Mediterranean's center of gravity would have shifted this way by the first century AD. A political capital in the east coupled with economic centers in the west might have produced a situation quite like that which would have prevailed had Antony defeated Octavian; or the political capital might eventually have followed the economic, leading again to a Mediterranean not so dissimilar from the real one in the first century AD. But even had that not happened, and the east Mediterranean had maintained control over the west, the economic and political situation would not have been wildly different from what prevailed from the fourth century AD onward. By the age of Justinian the east Mediterranean was significantly more urbanized than the west. The severe outbreaks of plague in the Mediterranean in the second and late sixth centuries would have happened as they did regardless of whether Athens or Rome was the ruling power (see Hawthorn 1991: 000 on what would be needed to stop plagues, and its impossibility before the eighteenth century), starting demographic decline and paving the way for Germanic invasions. Perhaps all that an Athenian victory over Rome in the late first millennium BC would have accomplished in the long run would have been a shift in the Mediterranean's dominant city from Constantinople to Athens.

There are, of course, other aspects to consider with such a counterfactual: had there been an Athenian Empire instead of a Roman, would there have been a Mediterranean conquest of northwest Europe? Or would that conquest have gone further? How much difference would changes in this have made to the early Middle Ages? We cannot begin to say. But overall, I suspect that even if Athens had broken through to 1A, by the first century BC or AD the distribution of power around the Mediterranean would not have looked so wildly different from how it looked in reality; and that by the fifth or sixth century AD, the differences would have been even less clear.

## 8.2. *Economics*

The classical period saw an unprecedented improvement in standards of living in the Greek world. People were living longer and eating better in more substantial and comfortable houses, surrounded by richer household goods (Morris, forthcoming). The Athenian Empire certainly contributed to this economic growth: it reduced tariffs and promoted simple uniform weights and measures, and thereby lowered transaction costs. The Piraeus provided a central market, making it easier to exploit regional comparative advantages.

The Athenian Empire certainly did not initiate Greek economic growth. We can trace the trend toward higher standards of living back into the eighth century, and it continued through the fourth. Skeletal evidence suggests that people all around the Mediterranean were relatively well nourished in this period. To take just one recently published example, in Punic Palermo the mean stature of 25 male skeletons (calculated by Trotter and Gleser's [1958] regression formula) was 168.0 cm., and that of 37 female skeletons 155.8 cm. There is even a hint of improvement through time: the mean heights in the Caserma Tuköry cemetery, spanning the sixth century, were 165.9 cm. for men and 154.3 for women, while in the Vivai Gitto cemetery, dating c. 575-275, they were 170.3 and 156.4 respectively (Di Salvo 1998a; 1998b).

The Athenian Empire clearly was not responsible for all these changes, but we need to ask what difference it would have made to post-404 economic growth if Athens had survived, and even gone on to level 1A. It now seems quite certain that there was slow but steady economic growth throughout the Roman Empire in the last two centuries BC and the first two AD. Industrial production had reached a high enough level to affect the chemical composition of rain, recovered in bores in the polar ice caps (Hopkins, this vol.); and Hopkins (1995/96) suggests that by AD 200 the productivity of the median subject of the empire was probably at something like 1.7 times subsistence, as compared to close to subsistence in 200 BC. I think this may be an underestimate, and it in any case conceals considerable regional variation, with some regions (especially Italy) doing much better (Hitchner, forthcoming).

Would an Athenian Mediterranean Empire have retarded or accelerated this growth, and if so, how much? Saller (forthcoming) makes it very clear that for all the importance of the economic growth under the early Roman Empire for the people living at the time, it is virtually invisible when plotted on a graph including the post-1750 European take-off. Athens would have to have stimulated a spectacular increase in growth rates to have made a real long-term difference. But Goldstone (2000) argues that in early modern times, quite small variations in institutions between one country and another made a massive difference to the application of inventive skills. Athenian and Roman institutions differed in many ways. Had the open, democratic culture of classical Athens spread around the Mediterranean, the ingenious inventions of Hellenistic times might have been applied in agriculture and commerce, instead of entertaining kings' courts, or water wheels might have spread more quickly. However, for two reasons, I suggest that an Athenian Mediterranean Empire would not have made a very great difference to economic growth. First, as noted above, it seems quite likely that had Athens overcome Persia and even Rome, it would probably have become much more like the Hellenistic and Roman empires in the process. Second, the small differences

Goldstone notes between late seventeenth-century England and other parts of the early modern world only had the effects they did because of centuries of accumulation of capital and small technical advances. Avner Greif (forthcoming) suggests that this is the real answer to the old question of why there was no industrial revolution in the Roman Empire: another millennium of slow, cumulative growth would be needed before a take-off could conceivably happen. It seems very unlikely to me that anything the Athenians could have done as imperial rulers would have dramatically changed the overall shape of economic growth, or even the distribution of its fruits, in the ancient Mediterranean.

### 8.3. *Culture*

Here, I think, we come to the most interesting and significant area in which we might speculate on what might have been. But it is also the shortest of my counterfactual discussions, because it is the most difficult subject to connect with the evidence from the actual world. Had Athenian and Roman Empires divided the Mediterranean between them, or had Athens overcome Rome, we can be fairly sure that Roman art and literature would have developed in very different ways. Both were substantially Hellenized by the third century BC (Cornell 1994: 390-98; Conte 1994: 13-70; Wiseman 1995), but the complicated relationship between Roman culture and Greek models that developed in the second and first centuries would surely have been very different had *Graecia* been not *capta* but *captrix*. Perhaps in a divided Mediterranean, Roman culture would have been more emphatically Italian; perhaps in an Athenian Empire it would have been more slavishly imitative. Either way, the classical legacy to medieval European culture would have been very different.

Probably the most important question to ask is what a successful Athenian Empire would have meant for Christianity and Islam. By the third and fourth centuries AD there was a general trend toward salvation religions with institutionalized churches, such as Mithraism in the Roman Empire and Zoroastrianism in Persia, so we might speculate that some kind of state church would probably have become important by AD 500. But here the precise details matter very much indeed. Given a more powerful Mediterranean religion, Islam may never have become a significant belief; given a weaker Mediterranean religion, Byzantium may well have collapsed in the face of the Arab invasions. Given a different outcome in 404 BC, Gibbon's notorious counterfactual about the battle of Poitiers in 732 might have come to pass, albeit by a very different route:

A victorious line of march had been prolonged above a thousand miles from the rock of Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire; the repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens to the confines of Poland and the Highlands of Scotland: the Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet. (Gibbon 1994 [1788]: 336)

## 9. **Conclusion**

I set out to answer three questions about the Athenian Empire:

- 1) How, and how much, did the Athenian Empire change Greek society?
- 2) Why did the Athenian Empire (or one of its competitor states) not become a major multiethnic empire like Assyria, Persia, or Rome?
- 3) In the long run, how much did the failure of the Athenian Empire (and its competitor states) matter?

My answers are as follows:

1) The Athenian Empire greatly accelerated the tempo of state-formation in the Aegean. It centralized important elements of the politics, administration, and finances of its subject cities in Athens; took direct control of an Aegean-wide armed force, dictating collective security measures; and established itself as the region's economic and cultural center. This process was an example of secondary state-formation, triggered by resistance to Persia, and Athens' centralization of resources and authority in turn triggered further secondary state-formation. Conditions in the Greek world as a whole—particularly war, preparation for war, and new opportunities to concentrate capital and convert it into coercive power—favored such processes, which began independently in Sicily in the 490s. But only in Athens' case did a large number of states voluntarily surrender part of their sovereignty to one center. This allowed Athens to create a stable power base that had no rivals. By the time of the Peace of Nicias, Athenian state-formation had begun to change the most basic structures of the old city-state system. Had Athens avoided defeat in 404, this process would have continued, and Athens would have emerged as the capital of a territorial state in the Aegean.

2) Athens failed to become the capital of a multiethnic empire not because of structural constraints, but because of human error. Had the Athenian generals not blundered and lost the entire fleet in 405, Athens would have stabilized at the head of its regional state, and resumed the process of centralization. We cannot know if it would then have broken through to become the head of a larger empire, but it would certainly have been in an excellent position to take advantage of the weakening positions of Sparta, Persia, and Syracuse in the fourth century.

3) In some ways, it did not matter very much whether Athens won the Peloponnesian War and went on to become the center of a major empire or not. If Athens had held on in 404 and gone on to defeat Sparta, Persia, and Syracuse, the Greek world would probably still have been unable to resist Rome, so that by the first century BC the Mediterranean would not have looked very different. And had an Athenian Empire in fact subdued Italy, the Germanic invasions from the third century AD onward would probably have led to roughly the same outcome as in fact occurred. But in other ways, it perhaps mattered a great deal. An Athenian Mediterranean Empire would probably have been quite different culturally from the Roman Empire. We cannot know how, or if, Christianity and Islam would have developed in late antiquity against such a background. The world might be a rather different place after all if the Athenian generals had listened to Alcibiades.

It is perhaps fitting that I should leave the last word to Thucydides:

Think ... of the great part played by the unpredictable in war: think of it now, before you are actually committed to war. The longer a war lasts, the more things tend to depend on accidents. Neither you nor we can see into them: we have to abide their outcome in the dark. (Thucydides 1.78)

Table 1. Mean adult heights at death in ancient Greece

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Pydna		
Metapontum	166.6 (n = 20)	157.5 (n = 40)
Kerameikos	171.3 (n = 4)	159.2 (n = 3)

Sources: Pydna, Triantaphyllou 1998; Metapontum, Henneberg and Henneberg 1998; Kerameikos, Bisel 1990. Heights calculated by Trotter and Gleser's (1958) regression formula

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Table 2. Ancient stature relative to modern stature, expressed as percentiles

a) Compared to contemporary US 18-year-olds (after Steckel 1995: tables 4, 5)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Pydna		
Metapontum	5-10	15
Kerameikos	20	20-25

b) Compared to Greek military personnel, 1960-61 (after Hertzberg et al. 1963: 122)

	<i>Male</i>
Pydna	
Metapontum	25
Kerameikos	55

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Table 3. Mean female ages at death

	<i>Early Iron Age</i>	<i>Classical</i>
Angel (all Greece)	30.9 (n = 90)	36.8 (n = 84)
Pydna	26.3 (n = 17)	
Metapontum		38.0 (n = 126)
Kerameikos		31.0 (n = 26)

Sources: As Table 4.1, plus Bisel and Angel 1985

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Table 4. Fifth-century cultural figures

a) Birthplace

Number	Percentage
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Athens	76	52
Outside Athens	71	48
Total	147	100

b) Main workplace

	Number	Percentage
Athens	99	70
Outside Athens	42	30
Total	141	100

Source: Hornblower and Spawforth 1996; Pollitt 1965

Notes: the total in tables 4a and 4b differ because several figures only have one type of information preserved, or there is debate (particularly over where they spent their careers)

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