

## A Note on Ithome

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WHEN the Lacedaemonians promised the Thasians that they would give them aid and comfort in their revolt by invading Attica and when they were prevented by the earthquake and Helot Revolt (Thuc. 1.101), their failure to keep their promise is accepted without question, and no one seems to expect that they can or should keep a foreign promise in a time of domestic peril. As it turned out, however, they did keep their promise, if not to the letter, at least in spirit—on the mountain-and-Mahomet principle: they not only could not send forces out to Attica but actually needed more forces than they had to contain and subdue the Revolt; and so they called upon “both others and the Athenians as allies” (Thuc. 1.102.1); consequently a substantial force (*πλήθει οὐκ ὀλίγω*) of Athenians was tied up in the Helot war, and it is doubtful if a greater number would have been involved (that is, kept from Thasos) had the Lacedaemonians invaded Attica.

Two questions will be raised: (1) Could the Spartans have been so subtle? (2) Does not Thucydides’ narrative specifically state that the Thasian Revolt was over (and so the promise no longer valid) before the Lacedaemonians called on the Athenians for help (1.101–2)? No (to answer the second and more solid objection first), Thucydides does not make explicit any temporal connection between the end of the Thasian Revolt and the invitation to Ithome; that the latter is later than the former might be implicit in the order of narrative, but there is good reason to believe that Thucydides sometimes finishes off an episode in the Pentecontaetia before going on to the next even when the actual end of the first episode came after the beginning of the second.<sup>1</sup> Certainly if Thucydides thought that the time sequence was clear from the order of narrative, there would have been little point in the temporal expressions which he constantly uses (*e.g.* *ἔπειτα*,

<sup>1</sup> For overlaps in the Pentecontaetia see J. Barns, “Cimon and the First Athenian Expedition to Cyprus,” *Historia* 2 (1953) 174–5; N. G. L. Hammond, “Studies in Greek Chronology of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries B.C.: IV, The Chronology of the Pentekontaetia,” *Historia* 4 (1955) 396–405; D. W. Reece, “The Date of the Fall of Ithome,” *JHS* 82 (1962) 113–5.

μετὰ ταῦτα, χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον). In this particular instance it seems to me not only fantastically over-keen but also rather ridiculous to insist (1) that only one thing can happen at a time, so that events occur like beads on a string one after another, with no action taken on the Ithome front till after the Thasian Revolt was tidied away; and (2) that after the Lacedaemonians were frustrated by domestic disaster in their desire to help the Thasians, they waited till the Thasians were subjugated before taking action that was tantamount to a fulfilment of their promise.<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to the question whether the Spartans could have been so subtle. And here we are forced to remember that practically all we know of the Spartans comes from sources that are not only non-Spartan but often anti-Spartan. They may report Sparta's actions with scrupulous accuracy, but they must frequently have been tempted into misconstruing Spartan motivations in accord with their prejudices. So here in Thucydides' account it is no surprise to learn that the Athenians were quick to interpret the Spartan invitation to them as a compliment to their skill (somewhat questionable) in siege-warfare and an admission of inadequacy on the part of the Spartans (Thuc. 1.102.2). And presumably the Spartans were perfectly willing to let the Athenians think what they wished, in the hope that the clever Athenians would be so delighted at the opportunity to demonstrate their superiority that it would not occur to them that they were being distracted from the business at hand in Thasos.

Unfortunately, however, for the Thasians, not all the Athenian force was necessary for their subjugation. Sparta had kept her promise by diverting a part of the Athenian forces. But when Thasos fell, what could be more natural than that the Spartans, having no longer any reason to put up with the Athenians' "expert" contribution to the war effort, should have dismissed them, probably with no more explanation than they had given them when they invited them in the first place? And again the Athenians must have divined a motive which acknowledged their power and showed the inadequacy and timidity of the Spartans: "fearing the audacity and revolutionary tendencies of the Athenians, and considering them foreigners too, lest they be persuaded, if they stayed, by the men in Ithome to turn the

<sup>2</sup> Not even the clause "since the war was stretching out in length" (Thuc. 1.102.1) gives any real indication of much time having passed, since even a month of unsuccessful war can seem long.

tables, they sent them alone of the allies away” (Thuc. 1.102.3). That this was Athenian interpretation rather than Spartan reasoning Thucydides makes perfectly plain in the next clauses: (the Spartans) “not showing their suspicion, but saying they had no further use for them.” Observe the genius of the Spartans! They tell the literal truth, that since the Thasian Revolt is over there is no longer any need for them to keep this Athenian force occupied; and the Athenians, who felt the slight and had already developed some of the paranoia proper to the tyrannic state, leapt to the conclusion that the Spartans had insulted them.

Are we dealing here with contemporary Athenian interpretations or with Thucydides’ understanding of how things must have been? Probably some of both; certainly the Athenians at the time seem to have reacted violently against Sparta, not only in their renunciation of the alliance with the Spartans against the Mede but also in the acquisition of new allies. And it is likely that Thucydides, in his search back through the fifth century for the point at which Athens and Sparta began to have more differences than common interests, hit upon these shifts in alliances and found what seemed to be their proximate cause in the Spartan dismissal of the Athenians from Ithome. Then, since he believed on other evidence in the importance of Sparta’s fear of Athenian power and growth, it was natural that he should accept as the truest of the Athenian speculations about the Spartan motive that which was based on Spartan fear of Athens’ mercurial qualities and radical tendencies.

### *The Dating Problem*

This much vexed problem seems to me to have an element of elasticity which I have not seen noted elsewhere. Although I do not believe that a sure solution is possible on the present evidence, a reluctance to emend numbers<sup>3</sup> makes me feel that the case for the early beginning of the Helot Revolt must be exhaustively explored.

The hitherto neglected element is the possible and even probable compression in the Ennea Hodoi-Drabeskos chronology; Thucydides seems (1.100, 4.102) to make of them almost a single episode, although

<sup>3</sup> When you change a number you lose a possible link with Thucydides and gain only your own sayso; you have not won Thucydides’ support for your theory!

he does not actually make explicit any temporal relation between them. His dating, with assists from others, is as follows:

	Aristagoras' attempt	498/7 B.C. (Hdt. 5.126)
32 years later	Ennea Hodoi-Drabeskos	465/4 B.C. (Thuc. 4.102)
29th year	Amphipolis	437/6 B.C. (Thuc. 4.102; schol. Aesch. <i>ad</i> 2.31 <sup>4</sup> )

From a later point of view, any short life of the colony could well have contracted to nothing at all, so the colony and disaster could have been thought to occur in a single year. But there is some evidence to the contrary: Diodorus (11.70.5) reports that the colonists, having allotted the land, subdued the Thracians for a time but were later overwhelmed; Herodotus (9.75) has Sophanes the general killed in Datos fighting over gold mines, implying that the colony existed long enough for other interests and expeditions besides that to Drabeskos; Pausanias (1.29.5) says, "First buried were those whom the Edonians slew, attacking them unexpectedly when they were *expanding* their control in Thrace up to Drabeskos."

These passages give only an indication that the colony had a life as well as a death; for the possible length of its life we must look at what effect the separation of the founding and disaster may have on the synchronism with the Thasian Revolt and thereby with the Helot Revolt. That is, although Thucydides (4.102) has given a single date for founding and disaster (465/4 B.C.), it is specifically the founding which he synchronizes with the Thasian Revolt (1.100).<sup>5</sup> If the Thasian Revolt may be dated by its synchronism with the Helot Revolt, using the evidence for the latter which is provided by Diodorus 11.63 (earthquake in 469/8 B.C.) and Philochoros<sup>6</sup> (Kimon's expedition in the twelfth year after Plataea) and adequately discussed by Hammond,<sup>7</sup> then both the revolt of Thasos and the founding of Ennea Hodoi would belong to 469 B.C. and so the life of the colony would be four years. The only requirement otherwise for the date of the Thasian Revolt is that it must follow the battle of Eurymedon, which must in turn follow the outbreak of the Naxian Revolt. It seems necessary to specify

<sup>4</sup> *Aeschinis Orationes* ed. F. Schultz (Leipzig 1865) 289–90.

<sup>5</sup> Thucydides' inclusion of the disaster in the same sentence as the founding in 1.100 is another example of his tendency here in the Pentekontaetia to finish things off in anticipation of their true date.

<sup>6</sup> *FGrHist* 328 F 117=schol. Ar. *Lys.* 1138.

<sup>7</sup> *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) "I, The Third Messenian War," pp.371–81.

“outbreak” here, since the important things about Naxos to Thucydides (1.99) were the revolt and the fact that the result, after a siege, was forced membership. He was not interested in how long the siege took, but in order to make his point about other subjugations (all later in time), he finished off Naxos in one sentence. And it seems clear that, because of his particular purpose, he would have done so whether the siege lasted for one campaign or several. That is, the enslavement of Naxos is not obliged to be chronologically tied to the revolt any more than the general remarks on the causes of defection. In other words, Naxos’ revolt must precede Eurymedon, but her subjection need not. The absolute dates might then be as follows, if we assume only one event to a year (summer):<sup>8</sup>

Revolt of Naxos	471 B.C.
Eurymedon	470 B.C.
Revolt of Thasos	469 B.C.
Ennea Hodoi	469 B.C.
Earthquake and Helot Revolt	469/8 B.C.
End of Thasian Revolt	467 B.C.
Kimón’s dismissal	467 B.C.
Drabeskos	465 B.C.

Since all the various chronologies are inextricably intertwined, it is important to consider how these dates might affect the dating of Themistocles’ flight to Persia. If we assume that the siege of Naxos continued for more than a year after the revolt, so that the sieges of Naxos and Thasos overlapped, we can understand for the first time the conflicting claims of Naxos and Thasos to be the scene of Themistocles’ close shave with the Athenian besieging forces. If Themistocles’ flight is dated to 469 B.C., Pausanias’ conviction and death, which gave rise to that flight, can most reasonably be assigned to the latter part of 470 B.C.<sup>9</sup> The neatness with which this dating ties back into the Helot Revolt is a strong point in its favor. That is, Pausanias’ conviction in late 470 B.C. permits the Helot Revolt to have arisen not out of a clear sky but after hopes had been raised by Pausanias (Thuc. 1.132.4) and dashed by his dishonor and death.

<sup>8</sup> But as M. E. White has pointed out (“Some Agiad Dates: Pausanias and his Sons,” *JHS* 84 [1964] 148f), it is not impossible that the three events (Naxos, Eurymedon, Thasos) occurred within only two campaigning seasons. So Naxos and Eurymedon might both be dated to the summer of 470 B.C.

<sup>9</sup> On the length of the interval, see White, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 142 and n.14.

Two difficulties remain, both of which can be removed only by putting off the death of Pausanias and flight of Themistocles to 467/6 B.C. and 466/5 B.C., so that Pausanias will have more time to beget three surviving sons, the eldest of whom can not have been born before 475 B.C.,<sup>10</sup> and so that Themistocles may arrive in Asia Minor when Artaxerxes was newly on the throne (Thuc. 1.137.3). Concerning Miss White's plea for the latest possible date for Pausanias' death in order to allow for the possibility of daughters or other hazards,<sup>11</sup> it is difficult to argue decisively, but the statistical law of probability which she invokes has far less validity for one particular case than in a general way for a large number. Furthermore, the example set by Pausanias' own grandfather Anaxandrides, whose first wife after long barrenness produced three sons in rapid succession (Hdt. 5.41.2-3), may be quoted as a family precedent. Not only is it possible, therefore, but it is not even improbable that Pausanias died in late 470 B.C.

Concerning the possibility of Themistocles' arrival in Asia Minor in 469 B.C., four years before Artaxerxes' accession, we have to contend with what we take to be the implication of Thucydides' narrative, which is that the writing of the letter followed immediately after the arrival. Here again we have a question not of convicting Thucydides of error<sup>12</sup> but of understanding (as Gomme was reluctant to do) that he wrote history and omitted material by his own lights rather than ours. When Thucydides wrote that Themistocles paid the captain of the vessel and sent a letter to Artaxerxes, we have no right to assume that he did nothing between these two acts; we may think only that he did nothing to the point. This is Thucydides' understanding of history in a nutshell; relevance and effectiveness are all. It is perfectly possible that Themistocles held no communication with the Persians for four years, either because he was waiting for the old king to die or because he had not yet given up hope of returning to Athens nor made up his mind to medize.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> White, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 140-52.

<sup>11</sup> *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 143: e.g. "infant mortality or death of a child before maturity, foetal deaths or miscarriages, and periods longer than the minimum between pregnancies."

<sup>12</sup> A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides I* (Oxford 1945) 398.

<sup>13</sup> Although we, like Herodotus and Thucydides, have been so influenced by the contemporary gossip and slander that we almost believe that Themistocles had already a long history of medism, it is both unjust and unreasonable to assume that Athens' first citizen and Greece's chief defender against the barbarian would have contemplated going over to the enemy while there was any hope of honorable return. Neither Hippias nor Alcibiades

A third item which has been thought to militate against Themistocles' early departure from Athens is Aristotle's story (*Ath. Pol.* 25) which makes Themistocles a colleague of Ephialtes. But this collaboration must have taken place before the ostracism, as a result of which Themistocles was already in Argos by 470 B.C., and provides a likely basis for the ostracism itself.<sup>14</sup> We must think, it seems to me, that Themistocles, overshadowed in the years after Salamis by Aristeides and Kimon and deprecating perhaps the power of the Areopagos, joined with Ephialtes in attempting to undermine its authority. Some minor success was enough to lead to popular worry about tyrannic ambitions and hence ostracism; Ephialtes was not important enough to merit such distinguished treatment. So the seventeen-year authority of the Areopagos, as Aristotle says, was gradually deteriorating, presumably through attacks like these. And the whole chapter illustrates Aristotle's narrative technique: a topic sentence which drives straight to the end results and then a doubling back to give illustrative anecdotes and to fill in stages.

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August, 1967

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is a proper parallel, the former operating on a despot-to-despot basis and the latter turning to fellow-Greeks of his own class against what he thought of as (and had helped to make) an irresponsible rabble. The fact that Themistocles did turn to Persia, perhaps after four weary and unsuccessful years of trying to counter through his friends the prejudice in Athens against him, was enough to start jealous tongues wagging and spiteful Athenians speculating on when he had first shown signs of pro-Persian sympathies, so that the poor exile's last resort gave color to a smear which spread backward into his whole life.

<sup>14</sup> Such, unfortunately, is the uncertainty of our evidence that it might even have been that Themistocles' known cooperation with Ephialtes was thought to make him too late for Xerxes and so brought Artaxerxes into the story.