

THUCYDIDES AND EGESTA

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IN THE WINTER OF 416/5 B.C. envoys from Sicilian Egesta arrived in Athens seeking military assistance against their neighbours of Selinous, with whom the Egestaians had quarreled concerning territory and certain marriage-rights. The Selinountines, having won the Syracusans as allies, were harassing the Egestaians by land and sea. The envoys made their appeal in the name of an existing alliance: ὥστε τὴν γενομένην ἐπὶ Λάχης καὶ τοῦ προτέρου πολέμου Λεοντίνων οἱ Ἐγισταῖοι ξυμμαχίαν ἀναμνησκόντες τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐδέοντο σφίσι ναὺς πέμψαντας ἐπαμύναι.¹ We must identify this alliance.

We expect the Egestaians, confronted by the Selinountine crisis and the active hostility of Syracuse, to couch their appeal in the strongest and most personal terms, that is, if an alliance existed that was beneficial directly to them, to cite that alliance in its most recent form. The passage of Thucydides, however, which seems at least superficially to conform to our expectations, has provoked differing interpretations.

Of one of these Dover's commentary² is representative: "πόλεμος *c. gen.* means 'war against' or 'war conducted by' . . . ; from the standpoint of Segesta or Athens, the Sicilian war of 427 was a war about Leontinoi, but not πόλεμος Λεοντίνων. ξυμμαχία Λεοντίνων, however, is straightforward Greek for 'alliance with Leontinoi'. . . . The Segestans therefore reminded Athens not of the alliance which Athens had made with Segesta, but of the alliance which she had made with Leontinoi. Thucydides comments implicitly on the unusualness of this procedure by disrupting the complex τὴν γενομένην — — — ξυμμαχίαν in order to juxtapose Λεοντίνων and οἱ Ἐγισταῖοι."³

¹Thucydides 6.6.2.

²In A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 4 (Oxford 1970) 221.

³Dover was not the first to find the sentence obscure; his interpretation had already been adopted by B. Jowett, *Thucydides Translated into English* (Oxford 1881) 1.412 with the note in 2.344, and Charles Forster Smith, *Thucydides with an English Translation* 3 (Cambridge, Mass. 1921) 193. Classen deleted Λεοντίνων from the text and has been followed by Bodin and de Romilly; the alliance is thus unarguably associated with Egesta. Steup, however, retained Λεοντίνων and explained: "τὴν γενομένην . . . Λεοντίνων ξυμμαχίαν, an ihr (der Egestäer) zur Zeit des Laches und des früheren Krieges (der Athener in Sizilien) abgeschlossenes Bündnis mit den L." This makes grotesque history. See J. Classen, *Thukydides* 6³ revised by J. Steup (Berlin 1905) note *ad loc.* and pages 249–251; Louis Bodin and Jacqueline de Romilly, *Thucydide: La guerre du Péloponnèse 4 Livres VI et VII* (Paris 1955) 6 and 161. P. A. Brunt, in his revision and abridgement of

We agree, of course, that the noun plus the genitive may mean (as well as "war against") "war conducted by," a rendition that should not be interpreted too restrictively. It may surely be construed as "war in which a people fight" or "participate." So τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων in Thucydides 1.1.1 is "the war in which the Peloponnesians and Athenians fought" ("the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians" is good English idiom) or, to use Dover's term, "the war conducted by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians." In 1.15.3 τὸν πάλαι ποτὲ γινόμενον πόλεμον Χαλκιδέων καὶ Ἑρετριῶν is similar.

Dover's assertion that the "war of 427 was a war about Leontinoi, but not πόλεμος Λεοντίνων" (i.e., "war conducted by") justifies an examination of Leontine involvement in that conflict.

In the late summer of 427 B.C. war had broken out between the Leontines and the Syracusans. The Leontine alliance (including Rhegion, Kamarina, and the Chalcidic states of Sicily), as Ionians and κατὰ παλαιὰν ξυμμαχίαν, sought the assistance of the Athenians, who sent twenty ships under the command of Laches and Charoiades.⁴ At the outset, then, the war was being conducted by the Leontines, the protagonists against Syracuse, and so they must have been regarded by the Athenians, to whom they turned for help.

In the following summer the Sikeliotes (the Hellenes in Sicily) continued to wage war (3.90.1). In the winter of 426/5 the Athenians with their Hellenic allies in Sicily (among whom we must number the Leontines) attacked Inessa (3.103.1). Later in the same winter Pythodoros relieved Laches at Rhegion; the former, with his few ships, was to be joined by Eurymedon and Sophokles with the balance of the forty vessels dispatched in response to a further plea by Athens' Sicilian allies, among whom, again, we count the Leontines (3.115.2-5). In the summer of 425 we find the Naxians encouraged by their belief that the Leontines and the other Hellenic allies were on the way to assist them against the Messenians. The Leontines and the allies did indeed arrive, only to be badly mauled before the accompanying Athenians made a landing to disperse the Messenians. The Athenians promptly withdrew to Rhegion but the Sicilian Hellenes maintained the fighting against one another (4.25.9-12). The conference at Gela in the summer of 424 brought a

Jowett (New York 1963), apparently followed Classen ("The Egestaeans reminded the Athenians of the alliance which they had made in the time of Laches and the former war").

⁴Thucydides 3.86. The phrase οἱ τῶν Λεοντίνων ξυμμαχοί, the allies of the Leontines, of course includes Leontines (one of whom was Gorgias); see Gomme's note (above, n. 2) 2.387 ("the Leontine alliance"). In *IG* 1².52 we have the ancient alliance, published as no. 64 in R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1969). For commentary see B. D. Meritt, *CQ* 40 (1946) 85-91, especially 91, and Meiggs and Lewis 173-174.

general peace to the Hellenic states of Sicily and the Athenians went home (4.65.1-2).

This summary of Thucydides' narrative demonstrates that the war was not so much a war *about* Leontinoi but rather one in which the Leontines participated prominently. They had invited the Athenians to Sicily, they had fought in concert with them, and to the Athenians they were fellow combatants, the leaders of the Chalcidians in Sicily.⁵

Upon the departure of the Athenians (424 B.C.) civil strife broke out in Leontinoi. The oligarchic faction (*οἱ δυνατοί*), having with the assistance of the invited Syracusans expelled the commons (*τὸν δῆμον*), abandoned their city (*ἐκλιπόντες καὶ ἐρημώσαντες*) and lived at Syracuse as citizens. Later, some of these left Syracuse and occupied Phokaiai, a district of Leontinoi, and Brikinniai, a fort in Leontine territory; there they were joined by most of the exiled commons along with whom they waged war from the fortifications, presumably against the Syracusans. The Athenians, aware of these events, in the summer of 422 B.C. dispatched Phaiax to Sicily to form a coalition of their own allies (among whom were the Egestaians?) and others against Syracuse and thus save the Leontine *demos*. Phaiax, however, accomplished little and returned to Athens.⁶

The significance of this summary is that in 416/5, at the time of the first negotiations in Athens, Leontinoi, as a polis, a political entity, did not exist. Her fate and the status of her inhabitants are emphasised by the Egestaians in their initial plea to the Athenians (6.6.2): *εἰ Συρακόσιοι Λεοντίνους τε ἀναστήσαντες ἀτιμώρητοι γενήσονται καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἔτι ξυμμάχους αὐτῶν διαφθείροντες*. . . . In this passage, as Dover (*ad loc.*) succinctly points out, *αὐτῶν* refers to the Athenians: "the allies still left to the Athenians" (i.e., Leontinoi has been lost); so, in their concluding admonition, the Egestaians exhort the Athenians to act: *σῶφρον δ' εἶναι μετὰ τῶν ὑπολοίπων ἔτι ξυμμάχων ἀντέχειν τοῖς Συρακοσίοις*. The inescapable conclusion, which we do not recall having seen stated, is that the Egestaians have discounted the Leontines as effective allies. Can we, in these circumstances, believe that the Egestaians made their appeal in the name of an Athenian alliance with Leontinoi?

In the following spring the Athenian envoys who had been instructed to inspect conditions and resources in Egesta returned to Athens, accompanied by Egestaians (6.8.1). Upon hearing favourably from both groups,

⁵R. Crawley's translation of 6.6.2 (New York 1934) expresses the circumstances well: "... the alliance made in the time of Laches, during the former Leontine war." We recognise the ambiguity of the English expression ("the war in which the Leontines fought," "the war that concerned Leontinoi") but we do not hesitate to allow a similar ambiguity to the Greek. See also Rex Warner's version: "... the alliance made in the time of Laches, during the war in which Leontini was concerned;" *Thucydides The Peloponnesian War* (Harmondsworth 1954).

⁶Thucydides 5.4.

the Athenians in the ekklesia voted to send a force to Sicily to assist the Egestaians against Selinous and, if their fortunes went well, to aid in the restoration of the Leontines.⁷ Note that the restoration of the Leontines is a secondary objective, dependent upon success in the first.

A few days later the ekklesia convened once more and on this occasion heard the bitter debate between Nikias⁸ and Alkibiades,⁹ at the close of which the Egestaians and Leontine fugitives, whose presence in Athens Thucydides (6.19.1) reveals for the first time, addressed the assembly. The refugees, begging for help, reminded the Athenians of their oaths, a clear reference to a past guarantee (above, note 4) that for them at least, even in their destitution, remained valid.¹⁰ Naturally, the Leontines too must make a personal appeal, to their own alliance with Athens; the Egestaian alliance afforded them no argument.

Thucydides' narrative, therefore, encourages us—even compels us—to believe that the Egestaians, when they first came to Athens, based their case for help upon *their own existing alliance* with the Athenians.¹¹ There is a negative argument. Can we seriously contemplate that the Athenians listened to the Egestaians, sent envoys to Egesta to inspect resources, and then voted affirmatively, all in response to the obligations inherent in an alliance with non-existent Leontinoi?

⁷6.8.2 ἐψηφίσαντο ναὺς . . . πέμπειν . . . , βοηθοὺς μὲν Ἑγεσταίοις πρὸς Σελινούν-
τιους, ξυγκατοικίσει δὲ καὶ Λεοντίνους, ἣν τι περιγίγνηται αὐτοῖς τοῦ πολέμου.

⁸Nikias twice refers to the Egestaian alliance in terms that suggest that it is vivid in his mind and that it is of long standing, predating contemporary wrongs suffered by Egesta (i.e., it is not a new alliance or a recent renewal): 6.10.5 (Ἑγεσταίοις δὴ οὖσι ξυμμάχοις) and 6.13.2 (καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ξυμμάχους μὴ ποιέεσθαι ὥσπερ εἰώθαμεν, οἷς κακῶς μὲν πράξασιν ἀμνησθόμεν, "as we have been accustomed to do in the past").

⁹Alkibiades is also acutely aware of the Egestaian alliance: . . . τοὺς ἐκεῖ ξυμμάχους . . . οἷς χρεών, ἐπειδὴ γε καὶ ξυνωμόσαμεν, ἐπαμύνειν (6.18.1).

¹⁰The garbled account in Diodoros (12.83.2–3), since we have Thucydides, may be ignored. Diodoros has combined the two embassies into one, in which the Egestaians (who promise the Athenians money and alliance against Syracuse) and Leontines (who appeal to kinship and τὴν προνάρχουσαν συμμαχίαν) collaborate. We may be sure that no Leontines accompanied the first embassy.

¹¹This judgement is reinforced by allusions made later in Thucydides' sixth book. Nikias (21.1) fears that the Athenians may be left with no friends other than the Egestaians. Hermokrates (33.2) calls the Egestaian alliance and the proposed restoration of Leontinoi a pretext (πρόφασιν μὲν Ἑγεσταίων ξυμμαχία καὶ Λεοντίνων κατοικίσει). Nikias (47), at the council of war in Sicily, advocates direct action against Selinous, ἐφ' ὅπερ μάλιστα ἐπέμψθησαν, and an expeditious return home, unless an unexpected opportunity to assist Leontinoi should arise; again, Leontinoi is secondary. Alkibiades (48), in his reply, mentions both objectives. The Leontine enterprise, of course, is closely connected with Athenian ambition against Syracuse (uppermost in Alkibiades' mind); this is why the Athenians announce (50.4) in the Great Harbour that they have come to restore the Leontines, κατὰ ξυμμαχίαν καὶ ξυγγένειαν (there were Leontines in Syracuse to hear these persuasive promises). Hermokrates, in his address to the Kamarinaians, scoffs (77.1) at Athenian pretensions, Λεοντίνων τε ξυγγενῶν κατοικίσεις καὶ Ἑγεσταίων ξυμμάχων ἐπικουρίας.

Armed by the conviction that *πολέμου* is to be construed with *Λεοντίνων* and that *ξυμμαχίαν* recalls an Egestaian alliance with Athens, we look once more at Thucydides 6.6.2. We have already quoted Dover's note on Thucydides' method of expression ("... disrupting the complex *τὴν γενομένην* — — — *ξυμμαχίαν* in order to juxtapose *Λεοντίνων* and *οἱ Ἑγεσταῖοι*"), which he identifies as Thucydides' comment "on the unusualness of this procedure," i.e., Egestaian allusion to an Athenian alliance with Leontinoi. We cannot deny the frequent eccentricity of Thucydides' word-order, although this passage does not present a striking example and the juxtaposition scarcely supports Dover's interpretation, which, apart from the historical considerations that we have discussed, is far too subtle, even for Thucydides. What is odd about the passage is the presence of *οἱ Ἑγεσταῖοι*; without these words we should have article (*τὴν*) and noun (*ξυμμαχίαν*) embracing an adjectival phrase, normal Greek usage. But the last word of the phrase is *Λεοντίνων*, which would then immediately precede *ξυμμαχίαν* and so, perhaps, cause ambiguity. If *οἱ Ἑγεσταῖοι* were absent, no-one would doubt that the Egestaians (*ἀναμνησκοντες*) are the subject of *ἑδέοντο*, the main verb. Thucydides, however, has written *οἱ Ἑγεσταῖοι* and, we suggest, placed the words carefully for the specific purpose of separating *Λεοντίνων* from *ξυμμαχίαν* and so, in his judgement, removing ambiguity: *Λεοντίνων* belongs in the adjectival phrase with *πολέμου* and not with *ξυμμαχίαν*, which must be associated with *οἱ Ἑγεσταῖοι*. The expression *τοῦ πολέμου Λεοντίνων*, if we may re-arrange Dover's statement, is "straightforward Greek" for the "war conducted by" the Leontines, the Leontine war. The Leontines are named because, after all, in the war of Laches' time they had been the protagonists and the Athenians had responded *κατὰ παλαιὰν ξυμμαχίαν*.

The most recent pact between the Egestaians and the Athenians, then, had been signed between 427/6, when Laches was dispatched to Sicily, and the winter of 426/5, when he was relieved. No mention of this alliance is made by Thucydides in his account of the earlier hostilities. This need occasion no scepticism, for during the same campaign the Athenians had concluded an agreement with Kamarina to which no allusion is made until 6.75.3 (winter, 415/4): (*οἱ Συρακόσιοι*) *πυνθανόμενοι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐς τὴν Καμάριναν κατὰ τὴν ἐπὶ Λάχηςτος γενομένην ξυμμαχίαν πρεσβεύεσθαι*. . . .

It is now time to introduce *IG* 1².19, the notorious epigraphic record of alliance between Athens and Egesta.¹² The text is dated by an archon whose name ended in -on and whose fourth letter from the end almost certainly demanded a vertical stroke;¹³ his identity has been pursued

¹²The most recently published text, based on autopsy, is in D. W. Bradeen and M. F. McGregor, *Studies in Fifth-Century Attic Epigraphy* (Norman, Oklahoma 1973) 71–81; see also Meiggs and Lewis (above, n. 4) no. 37. The first two lines of *IG* 1².20 are part of the document.

¹³For conservative epigraphic commentary see Bradeen and McGregor 76–77.

relentlessly for a generation or more. We have shown that he cannot have held office after the expedition of Laches; he was therefore not Antiphon (418/7 B.C.). The archons of 427/6 and 426/5 were Eukles and Euthynos, which means that we must search for our fugitive in earlier years. Two conclusions follow inevitably: (1) the Egestaian appeal is not to the document that we catalogue as *IG* 1².19; (2) since the Egestaians are citing their most recent guaranties from Athens, which they place in the time of Laches, they must be recalling a renewal, or revision, of *IG* 1².19.¹⁴

Epameinon, serving in 429/8, a year when the Athenians were fully preoccupied in the homeland and we have no evidence that they gave a thought to Sicily, is scarcely a serious candidate. The trail now takes us back to the 450s, in which decade Ariston (454/3) and Habron (458/7) merit inspection. The former fails to satisfy the epigraphic qualifications and we are left with Habron.¹⁵ Here we stop: in the debate over this inscription unanimity is not easy to find; but all agree that it cannot be set earlier than 460 B.C.¹⁶

We have deliberately eschewed the vigorous epigraphic campaigns that have been fought to recover the full name of the archon lurking maimed in line 3 of *IG* 1².19. In obedience to the not inconsiderable evidence supplied by Thucydides we have insisted (we are tempted to write "proved") that no formal diplomatic agreement had been signed by Athens and Egesta later than the time of Laches; with the aid of the undeniable epigraphic evidence (the letters -on in the archon's name), that the inscription cannot be dated to Laches' *strategia* and that the Egestaians, therefore, appealed to a renewal; and that *IG* 1².19 must in consequence be firmly allocated to the 450s.

B. D. Meritt has now published¹⁷ the results of fresh and comprehensive epigraphic study of the archon's name in *IG* 1².19 in which he argues powerfully that the remains in line 3 justify the reading [h]αβρον. "The epigraphical evidence is paramount and decisive." Alongside this judgement we place a twin: "the historical evidence is decisive."

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¹⁴The treaties of 433/2 with Rhegion and Leontinoi (Meiggs and Lewis [above, n. 4] nos. 63 and 64) are renewals; see Meritt (above, n. 4).

¹⁵Meiggs and Lewis, in their commentary ([above, n. 4] no. 37), doubt whether the vertical stroke in the fourth *stoichos* from the end is part of a letter but prefer Habron on other grounds. (They dismiss Antiphon, partly for the reasons that we have argued *in extenso*.)

¹⁶We ourselves should in any case disqualify Konon (462/1) because the name does not fit the vertical stroke. Its presence or absence, however, does not affect our case: *IG* 1².19 belongs in the 450s.

¹⁷"The Alliance Between Athens and Egesta," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 121 (1977) 437-447, with bibliography.