NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS/NOTES DE LECTURE

WHAT DID THE ATHENIANS DEMAND IN 432 B.C.?

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IN THE AUTUMN OF 432 B.C. the Athenians sent the Spartans a counter-demand that they should "drive out" (the word ἐλαύνειν is used twice in Thucydides' account) the curse (ἄγος) of Taenarum and the curse of the goddess (Athena) of the Bronze House (Thuc. 1.128.1–2, 135.1). The allusions were, as Thucydides explains in 1.128 and following, to the murder of some helot suppliants at the altar of Poseidon at Taenarum—not long before the earthquake of (probably) 465,[1] since that was considered to be a direct consequence of the act of sacrilege—and to the (religiously polluting) death by starvation of Pausanias (in the early 460s).

But what did the Athenians *mean* by the words they used? What were they telling the Spartans to do? None of the major historians of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War[2] appears to have anything to say on this particular point. The commentaries of Gomme and Hornblower[3] are also silent. They both pass straight on to discussion of, and comment on, Thucydides' Pausanias narrative, which follows (1.128.3–134). However, the meaning of the Athenian demand is certainly not self-evident. It cannot just have been that the Spartans should make restitution through expensive offerings to the offended gods, since that had already been done in fulsome style, at least in the case of the death of Pausanias (two bronze statues were dedicated), as Thucydides himself explicitly tells us (1.134.4).

The preceding Spartan demand, sent via an embassy to Athens, to which this reponse was a counter (ἀντεκέλευον, 1.128.1), had been that the Athenians should "drive out" (ἐλαύνειν is used twice, at 1.126.2 and 127.1) the curse (ἄγος) of the goddess. Thucydides explains (1.126.11–12) that this was a reference to the eternal (ἐκεῖνοί τε ... καὶ τὸ γένος τὸ ἀπ' ἐκείνων) curse placed on the Alcmaeonid family (though he does not name them) for having been responsible for the sacrilegious massacre of the Cylonian suppliants after their failed coup d'état in the late-seventh century.[4] Though it was couched in ostensibly general

[1] For the date, about which there has been much dispute, see Thuc. 1.101.1–2; Plut. *Cimon* 16.4; Diodorus 11.48.2; and Gomme 1945: 405–408.

[2] For example, Grote 1884: 360–361, 368–369; Busolt 1904: 845–846; Beloch 1927: 296–297; Kagan 1969: 320–321; de Ste. Croix 1972: 322.

[3] Gomme 1945: 431; Hornblower 1991: 211–213.

[4] Probably in 632. Because of this curse the Alcmaeonids had been expelled from Athens twice (and subsequently restored), in 632 or soon after, and in 508. The relevant source material is

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terms, Thucydides makes it clear that in fact the Spartan demand had a specific, personal target—Pericles. It meant "drive out (i.e., exile) Pericles," whose mother, Agariste, the niece of Cleisthenes, was an Alcmaeonid (cf. Hdt. 6.131). This was not a serious negotiating stance. The Spartans did not really expect that the Athenians would accede to their demand, but it was calculated to cause Pericles embarrassment, and maybe affect his political popularity and influence (cf. also Thuc. 2.13.1).

It would appear from their deliberately parallel use of ἐλαύνειν that the Athenian counter-demand in effect required the Spartans in their turn to drive out, expel, somebody from Sparta who might be thought to be "accursed." This is also strongly suggested by the words used by Thucydides at 1.139.1, referring back to the original Spartan embassy (the first of three); τοιαῦτα ἐπέταξάν τε καὶ ἀντεκελεύσθησαν περὶ τῶν ἐναγῶν τῆς ἐλάσεως, "so much for what they demanded, and what was demanded of them in return, concerning the driving out of *those under a curse*" (my italics). The plural here is surely not just loose writing.

Although it is theoretically possible that the Athenians, in composing their reply, did not have anyone in particular in mind, that would have made for a rather inept response. A much more effective and pointed reply would have been one which had a corresponding and parallel objective, i.e., to cause political embarrassment to some *particular* person (or persons) prominent at Sparta by "demanding" his (or their) expulsion. Of course, as with Pericles, he (or they) need not have been, and probably was not, specifically *named.* What mattered was that the (unnamed but obvious) target could be plausibly thought to be either directly responsible for, or (like Pericles) a descendant of those responsible for, certain well-known acts of pollution in the early 460s, i.e., the death of Pausanias and the murder of the helots.[5]

But who was it? A likely candidate must be the reigning Eurypontid king, Archidamus. This is not such a surprising possibility as it might at first sight seem. The young Archidamus, who had succeeded his grandfather Leotychidas formally on his death in 469 (though Leotychidas had been in exile in Tegea during 476–469), could well have had (or been widely thought to have had) something to do with the death of the Agiad regent Pausanias and the murder of the helots in the early years of his reign.[6] It is true that Thucydides does not say

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conveniently collected and discussed in Stanton 1990: 17–26, 138–144. There is a full discussion of family curses, city pollution, and purification in Parker 1983: especially 191–206, 257–280.

[5] These may not in fact have been separate, unconnected actions. Why should Pausanias have gone, as he did, all the way from Sparta to Poseidon's sanctuary at Taenarum merely to have a discussion (and incriminate himself!) with the man he supposedly was using to take letters to the Persian King's emissary, Artabazus (Thuc. 1.129.1, 132.5–133)? Was Pausanias in fact caught negotiating with some helots at Taenarum? See Cartledge 1979: 214.

[6] Plutarch (*Cimon* 16.4) tells us that the earthquake occurred in the fourth year of Archidamus' reign.

so, or even mention Archidamus, in his account of Pausanias' arrest and demise. His narrative concentrates heavily on the role of the ephors in that murky affair (especially in 1.131.2–134.2).

Nevertheless, there is strong evidence of bad blood between the two Spartan royal houses during this period, an antipathy in which Archidamus played a leading role. The other Spartan king (belonging to the Agiad house) in 432 was Pleistoanax, the son of Pausanias. Pleistoanax had defiantly named his son Pausanias after his own murdered father, though he was officially a proven traitor. Furthermore, Pleistoanax himself had been exiled in 445 for allegedly taking bribes to curtail the invasion of Attica in the previous year, and he was still in exile in 432.[7] For no less than thirteen years Archidamus had enjoyed the position of being the only true king on public view at Sparta. The situation was a recipe for tensions and divisions between the two royal families and their respective adherents, divisions which Sparta's enemies would naturally wish to exploit. This was surely the reason why Delphi on a number of occasions urged the Spartans to recall Pleistoanax, i.e., to improve domestic morale and harmony, and remove an exploitable weakness. This they eventually did in late 427 (Thuc. 5.16.3)—significantly, the very year in which Archidamus died.[8] It is hard to believe that there was no causal connection between these two events. The natural inference is that Archidamus had prevented a recall for as long as he was alive. The recall of Pleistoanax continued to be criticised in some quarters at Sparta until at least 421 (Thuc. 5.16, 17.1).

Archidamus is presented by Thucydides, writing with the benefit of hindsight, as a statesmanlike, dovish, figure,[9] opposed to a rash declaration of war (1.80–85), and cautious in command (2.10–12, 18). However, he did lead the Spartan and allied armies when they invaded and ravaged Attica in 431, 430, and 428, and in the attack on Plataea in 429. He may not have been perceived at Athens at the time as quite such an admirably restrained figure as Thucydides presents him. Even if we accept as accurate Thucydides' version of Archidamus' contribution to the war-debate at Sparta, that was probably a nicety not widely appreciated by the majority of Athenians in late 432. What they *knew* was that Sparta had declared war on them, and that Attica was about to be invaded by a Peloponnesian army commanded by their king, Archidamus. At this time they may well have regarded him as a prime enemy target. It is also at least a fair possibility that Thucydides' distinctly favourable picture of Archidamus was somewhat influenced by what he was subsequently

[7] For the exile of Pleistoanax, see Thuc. 2.21.1, 5.16.3; Plut. *Pericles* 22.2–3. His brother, Cleomenes II, was acting as regent (Thuc. 3.26.2). The younger Pausanias may have been born *after* Pleistoanax's exile (see White 1964: 141). That would have made the choice of name even more pointed.

[8] For Archidamus' death in 427, see Thuc. 3.1.1, 3.26.2, 3.89.1; and Gomme 1945: 405.

[9] For a fuller account of the Thucydidean presentation of Archidamus, see Westlake 1968: 122–135.

told in exile by Archidamus' son and successor, Agis.[10] If Agis *was* his main source for Archidamus' character and actions, that would be reason enough for the omission of any mention of Archidamus in his narrative of the Pausanias affair.[11]

But Thucydides does not *say* at 1.128.1 that the Athenians in 432 meant Archidamus, as he does say that the Spartans meant Pericles. Why not? Surely he must have known it, if it was the case. But then why omit it? I suggest that he did know, but did not say so, partly because he wished Pericles' name to stand out in bolder relief here (just as Pericles' speeches in the assembly are left unpaired), and partly because his dominant narrative concern at this point is to move on to his Pausanias story, which itself is going to be deliberately paired with the immediately following Themistocles story (1.135.2–138.5; see 138.6 for the intentional narrative linkage).

The implication of the Athenian counter-demand in 432 was, I would suggest, "drive out, i.e., exile, (the accursed) Archidamus." Of course, this was not something they seriously expected the Spartans to do. However, the man who had been a reigning king for thirty-seven years would naturally be viewed in Athens as the Spartan political counterpart to Pericles (interestingly, they were guest-friends; see Thuc. 2.13.1), who thus afforded them the perfect tit-for-tat reply, one which both embarrassed Archidamus and played on the resentment of the Agiad house and their adherents. The Athenian "demand," just as much as the Spartan, was designed to cause political embarrassment to the most prominent individual on the other side, and thereby, hopefully, weaken Sparta's internal cohesion and determination.

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[10] For Thucydides' twenty-year exile from Athens, and consequent personal familiarity with prominent individuals on the opposite side, see Thuc. 5.26.5–6.

[11] For the many inconsistencies and implausibilities in Thucydides' Pausanias story, see, e.g., Lang 1967; Rhodes 1970. Both Lang and Rhodes take the view that Thucydides' account derives from "official sources" in Sparta.

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