

VII. Thucydides and the Number of Acharnian *Hoplitai*

STERLING DOW

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

I. PREVIOUS STUDIES	PAGE
Editors and the Number in the MSS	66
Emendation to Read "Citizens"	69
Gomme's <i>Commentary</i>	70
II. THE SIZE OF ACHARNAE	
Representation in the <i>Boulê</i>	71
The Number of Known Acharneis	73
Other Data on Acharnae	73
III. THUCYDIDES ON ACHARNAE	
The Context in Thucydides	76
Thucydides in the Light of the Parenthesis	78

I. PREVIOUS STUDIES

*Editors and the Number in the MSS.** In a notable parenthesis,¹ Thucydides says that the *hoplitai* of the deme Acharnae were 3,000 in number (2.20.4). Every living scholar, I suppose, who has any right to an opinion, believes 3,000 is much too large a figure.

* The greatest debt of anyone today who works on Thucydides is to the late A. W. Gomme, and the greatest deprivation is not to be able to talk again with him.

The typescript was read beneficially by A. Andrewes, M. H. Chambers, K. J. Dover, and G. L. Huxley. For consultation about bouleutic quotas, I am grateful also to H. J. Carroll, Jr., and D. F. Ogden; for other kind help to W. M. Calder, III; and not least to my wife.

In an unpublished senior distinction thesis written here in 1957, Whitefoord R. Cole made a notable beginning of the studies to which the present article leads.

¹ The term "parenthesis," like the symbols for it, is convenient and is used in the present article; but of course Thucydides, though he wrote parenthetical clauses, could only punctuate with stops, i.e. one [:] before and one [:] after.

Thucydides himself says Athens had in all close to 30,000 *hoplitai*.² Acharnae was one deme out of 140. Though large, Acharnae was hardly half of its tribe, and the quota for the whole tribe would be ca. 3,000. The actual data on the size of the deme will be looked into presently. First it will be convenient to see how scholars have dealt with the text.

The words are (τρισχίλιοι γὰρ ὅπλιται ἐγένοντο). They are present in all the MSS. without any variation whatever.

Some editors have simply let the text stand as it is, unmarked: C. Hude (Teubner), H. Stuart Jones-J. E. Powell (Oxford); C. Forster Smith (Loeb) followed their lead. Acceptance of the text need not mean acceptance of the fact, but in the past a few scholars did accept the figure as a fact. Writing, at first hurriedly, in 1892, presumably without chancing upon an adverse opinion, J. E. Sandys, *Aristotle, Ath. Pol.*² (1912) 104, continued to accept, or rather still found no reason to doubt, the figure 3,000 for Acharnae, which he printed without a qualm; he actually proceeded to argue, on the basis partly of this figure, about the total number of Athenian *hoplitai*.

The common opinion, right or wrong, is that many numbers in Thucydides come to us in corrupt form.³ The editor cannot

² For numbers of Athenian *hoplitai*, I have given figures throughout uncritically, taking them from Thucydides or from Gomme. The reason for this is that to give Thucydides the benefit of every doubt, and to let the reader see things as he saw them, his own figures, which are maxima, are the fairest to give. Just how much they ought to be reduced, if at all, is disputed. Some recent varied studies of Greek population are cited here as introductory: Arnold H. M. Jones, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford 1957) 161-80; A. W. Gomme, "The Population of Athens Again," *JHS* 79 (1959) 61-68; P. Salmon, "La Population de la Grèce antique," *Bull. Budé* 18, No. 4 (1959) 448-76; V. G. Valaoras, "A Reconstruction of the Demographic History of Modern Greece," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 38 (1960) 115-39.

It did not suit Thucydides' context to be exact or to provide details. One detail is the (non-archer) *hippeis*, 1,000 in all, ca. 100 from each tribe. They are of course understood to be included. Metic *hoplitai* also must surely have been included; that will be clear from the final section of the present article. They were in all ca. 5,500 in 431 B.C. (Gomme, *Population*, 5, 25-27; the figure is somewhat conjectural).

³ It may be still too soon for an inclusive study, but several of the numbers—mostly smaller numbers and not the 3,000—have been examined critically in: (1) B. Hemmerdinger, "Les chiffres dans l'archétype de Thucydide," *Studi italiani di filol. class.* 25 (1951) 89-93. This has value apart from his hypothesis of conversions from one kind of numerals to another, which, in the form Hemmerdinger advances, is dubious. (2) D. M. Lewis, *Towards a Historian's Text of Thucydides* (Diss. Princeton, 1952, unpublished); also unpublished articles. Many numbers are considered. (3) M. H. Chambers, Jr., *Studies in the Veracity of Thucydides* (Diss. Harvard, 1954, unpublished) 69-85 (seven dubious numbers).

always give the correct form, but he can warn against uncritical adoption of the MSS. reading. Thus in the most recent edition, that of O. Luschkat (1960), the word for "three thousand" is obelized, and the apparatus says *numerus nimius*. The editor did not venture an explanation of how the error could have arisen. E. C. Marchant's suggestion was to reject the entire four-word parenthesis as spurious. He may have considered it, for instance, as a scholion which interpolated itself into the text. This is a clear-cut solution. It would be a stronger solution if a series of comparable interpolations in the text could be proved; still an erring scholiast might be easier to imagine than an erring Thucydides.

Thus far we have noted rejections of the unanimous, unvarying reading of the MSS. without explanation of how the error came about. An explanation would be welcome, i.e. a plausible process of corruption, showing how much smaller numerals, presumably acrophonic, written by Thucydides, were misread by a copyist to give the (alphabetic) numeral eventually written *trischilioi*.

The most extreme reduction is that of the first critic of the figure 3,000, H. Müller-Strübing, who conjectured (*Aristophanes* [1873] at page 649 in a long excursus, 639–59) that the alphabetic numeral in some early papyrus had been altered by a copyist to Γ (3,000) from Τ' (300) written by Thucydides. As J. Classen (*ad loc.*) first saw, however, the number 300 is both smaller than the probable fact, and insipid.

The same judgment applies to the next largest conjecture. A. Milchhöfer in *RE* 1(1893), s.v. "Acharnai," reports a conjecture of J. M. Stahl that Thucydides wrote Ϟ (500), which became corrupted into Γ, which in turn was understood as γ.

To obtain a better number, and also to illustrate how easy the creation of such hypotheses is, I offer one of my own. Thucydides wrote 1,000, using the acrophonic numeral X. When this was translated into the alphabetic system, the scribe read in his copy some cursive shape of chi enough like the then current shape of gamma to suggest gamma, and he wrote gamma, thinking the numeral was already translated into the alphabetic system, thus making χ (1,000) into γ (3,000), which in due course was written *trischilioi*.

Finally, trying to approximate the truth, A. W. Gomme noted

that if Thucydides wrote XHH (1,200), it conceivably could have been altered into XXX. Understandably, Gomme put this conjecture forward without any assurance. His figure itself, 1,200, is close, I think, to the reality (*infra*), and if there is nothing more to be said, then no better guess about the process of corruption can be made than Gomme's.

This completes the account of textual treatments of *trischilioi*. In slightly varying degrees, it is all arbitrary. Gomme admitted that he could not understand how the perversion of Thucydides' figure, whatever exactly it was, into 3,000 came about.

If however *trischilioi* is desperate—i.e. is not easy to get rid of—there may be hope in some other alteration.

Emendation to Read "Citizens." To attempt to extract from one word in a parenthetical clause a meaning which will make a decisive difference would be hazardous. *τρισχίλιοι γὰρ ὄπλῃται ἐγένοντο* say the MSS. In place of a military term, "mustered" or the like, or a term which recognized that *hoplitai* existed for the state, e.g. "furnished," Thucydides used an unspecific word which meant little, or no, more than "were," or at most "amounted to." *Egenonto* would be equally appropriate for a clause about slaves, *thêtes*, citizens, or the whole population; Thucydides used it in statements about numbers (refs. Classen-Steup *ad loc.*). Inevitably, *hoplitai* has been emended to *politai* (F. Polle, *Neue Jahrbücher* 135 [1887] 109–11; an intelligent article, however). This emendation has won high approval. J. Classen-J. Steup reject Müller-Strübing only to favor (though without actually adopting) Polle.

If *politai* meant all persons of citizen status—men, women, and children, excluding only metics and slaves—then Thucydides might seem to be saved; for Acharnae surely had at least 3,000 such persons. But (1) figures for the *total* citizen population of a deme (i.e. men, women, and children) were probably never compiled, probably not even in the one regular census ever taken in Athens, Demetrius of Phalerum's in 317/6 B.C.; (2) Thucydides, like nearly all Greek writers at nearly all times, gives only adult males (the exceptions are mostly figures for the mass destruction of human life); and (3) the figure 3,000 for all persons of citizen status would mean that Acharnae included ca. 2.5% of all Athenians, whereas its bouleutic quota indicates that it included

ca. 4.4% of all Athenians, or ca. (4.4% of 130,000 [Gomme's figure]=) 5,720. Thus Polle's emendation would put into Thucydides' text a dull under-statement. Other demes of Attica doubtless contained 3,000, so that the figure 3,000 would not bear out the statement that Acharnae was the largest.

Hence if emendation must be resorted to, then *politai* would have to mean adult males only, i.e. *hoplitai* and *thêtes*. This is a very different matter, but still no solution, since with *thêtes* included but metics excluded, 3,000 is still much too large, as will be clear *infra*. So Polle's emendation, on either meaning, is to be rejected.⁴

Gomme's Commentary. In recent decades⁵ A. W. Gomme *ad loc.* is the only scholar who has attempted accurately to establish facts about the population of Acharnae, so as to view the present passage in the light of exact truth. His remarks are brief enough to be summarized without injustice [a few comments of my own being added in square brackets].

Vol. 2, pages 72-74: (1) Acharnae had 22 *bouleutai* in the fourth century. (2) Melite approached it with 17 or 18; no other had more than 12. On this evidence Acharnae *was*, as Thucydides says (2.19.2), the largest deme. [About the exact representation of Melite we are still uncertain. Probably it was not over 12. Other figures *infra*.] (3) The whole Athenian citizen hoplite force was only ca. 24,000, even when all are included, both active army and reserves. (4) Each tribe should have had 2,400 *hoplitai*, and of the 2,400 from Oeneis, Acharnae should have had, to judge by its bouleutic quota, $\frac{22}{50}$, which is slightly under 1,100. (5) The *active* army totalled 13,000 men, of whom only ca. 850 should have been, on the same reasoning, Acharneis. The present phrase would naturally be taken to mean the active army only. [This last sentence seems to me wrong, quite apart from the fact that to insist on it would be ruinous.] (6) Suppose Acharnae was rich and had a larger proportion of *hoplitai* than

⁴ References to older studies: K. J. Beloch, *Bevoelkerung*, page 106, note 3. Beloch reports that earlier he had been tempted to think the 3,000 was meant to refer to the whole hoplite contribution of Oeneis, but that the clarity of Thucydides' wording finally dissuaded him.

⁵ Beloch in 1886 (*Bevoelkerung*, pages 104-6) gave Acharnae 1,540 citizens ($\frac{22}{50}$ of his total of 35,000 in ca. 431), and would allow a total of only 16,000 *hoplitai* for all Athens. Beloch was not sure which should be blamed, Thucydides or a copyist; but that point seems not to have interested him.

most of the demes; still, the total cannot be stretched to over 1,200.

Gomme concludes Thucydides must have written a figure of that order. "The MS. error is inexplicable" (page 74); the conjecture given *supra* follows, without conviction. It is abundantly clear that what we have in the text is an error; it may well be an exaggeration of at least 250%.

Facts are now known which tend, on the whole, to strengthen most of what Gomme says. Moreover the procedure for estimating the size of a deme has some interest of its own.

II. THE SIZE OF ACHARNAE

Representation in the Boulé. In the Cleisthenian arrangement, the deme Acharnae all by itself made up a trittys. (The trittys was called, apparently, *Pedieis*, as H. T. Wade-Gery has seen: B. D. Meritt, *Hesperia* 9 [1940] 3 and refs.; Gomme, *Com.* 2, page 73.) Among all the 140 demes, only two others certainly had this privilege, and they belonged to the tribe *Aeantis*, which was apparently the smallest of all ten, and which had also the smallest number of demes, viz. six: *Phalerum* (nine *bouleutai*) and *Aphidna* (16 *bouleutai* after 307/6) were each a trittys. (*Alopece* [ten *bouleutai*], in *Antiochis*, may have been a trittys, but that is uncertain; still more uncertain is *Cydathenaeum* [12 *bouleutai*], in *Pandionis*.) Acharnae was conspicuous in the Cleisthenian arrangement. Doubtless its *chôra* also was a conspicuously large area.

Beloch was the first to see that the most direct and apparently the most firm evidence for the size of Acharneis is its representation in the (Cleisthenian) *boulé* of 500. Now that figures (to quite an extent unpublished) are available for bouleutic representation in the fourth and also in the third centuries B.C., we can note that in both periods quotas remained fixed: there are variations of one only, apparently one-year arrangements usually between small demes. On the contrary, there is no indication of regular, or of spasmodic, re-assignments of quotas. There is every reason to suppose that Acharnae, which had 22 *bouleutai* in 360/59 B.C. (*IG* II².1745), had 22 also in 431 B.C.; presumably 22 was the quota assigned, on the basis of population, by

Cleisthenes, and retained unaltered for 200 years, viz. 508/7–308/7. In the third century, after the creation of two new tribes and a new distribution of quotas, a new period of rigidity was inaugurated, lasting until in the 220's B.C. a thirteenth tribe was created. For Acharnae itself we have only the one complete (22-member) list. Soon after 307/6, a partially-preserved list gives 16 names; there may have been 22 in the original.

Following Beloch, then, we reckon that 22 *bouleutai* means 44% of the 50 *bouleutai* from the whole tribe (Oeneis); 22 *bouleutai* out of the 500, or 4.4%, in the whole *boulê*. No other deme had nearly so many *bouleutai*; the next largest known quotas, all ante-307/6, are Lamptreis 14 (adding the two parts, Upper and Lower), Paeanieis 12 (or about 12, ditto), Cydathenaeis 12 or 13, Cephaleis 12, Aphidnae 16 (but this last is in 304/3 B.C.). It is extremely unlikely that any unknown quota exceeded any of these. In short, Thucydides' statement that Acharnae was the largest of the demes is upheld by incontrovertible evidence.⁶ Its nearest rival, Lamptreis, actually two demes perhaps topographically distinct from each other, was less than two-thirds as large.

The question might be raised whether in 508 B.C., or in 431, the Acharneis were not proportionately even more numerous than their bouleutic representation of 22 would indicate. The argument would be that no deme *could* ever be given a clear majority, *scil.* 26 or more, in its tribe, no matter how big the deme was. (One or two demes had as many as 26, but only in the Roman period, when quotas had long since been abandoned.) Acharnae *may* have been bigger in 431 than our count of names scattered up and down the centuries—fewest from the fifth century and earlier—would suggest; but for what it is worth (*infra*), the count of names virtually disproves the idea that Acharnae had as many as 50% of the whole tribe.

⁶ Acharnae is first introduced in the following terms (2.19.2): (the Spartans under Archidamus in 431) . . . ἕως ἀφίκοντο ἐς Ἀχαρνάς, χώρον μέγιστον τῆς Ἀττικῆς τῶν δῆμων καλουμένων, καὶ καθεζόμενοι ἐς αὐτὸ στρατόπεδόν τε ἐποιήσαντο χρόνον τε πολὺν ἐμμέναντες ἔτεμον. I have not attempted any study of what is involved here. ABEFG'M all have *chôron*, which means that C, one of "the three most important MSS. of Thucydides" (viz. B, C, H: B. Hemmerdinger, *Essai sur l'histoire du texte de Thucydide*, [Paris 1955] 55) has the alternative *chôrion*, although H is "an indirect copy of B" (Hemmerdinger, page 56). R. Shilleto (ed. 1880) defended *chôron*, Gomme tended to favor it, Luschkat has it; and I have adopted it on the ground that Thucydides would not have wanted, of all things, a *diminutive* here (see *infra*).

The Number of Known Acharneis. In 1903, when Kirchner finished *Prosopographia Attica*, he tabulated all the known demesmen. Gomme (*Population*, 55 ff.) made some revisions of the figures, and Gomme's figures will be used here. (Eventually extensive additions can be made, but it would be labor wasted to attempt them now.) We find that Acharneis are known to the number of 452. No other deme has so many: the next are Lamptreis (two parts together) 391, Paeanieis (also two) 377, Cydathenaeis 295, Meliteis 257. These figures include all demesmen known to Gomme down to 30 B.C., and I have the impression that Acharneis for the Hellenistic period are not proportionately as abundant as some of the others; prytany and ephêbic lists containing the deme are few. Be this as it may, Thucydides is again confirmed.

Out of a total of 12,279 known demesmen (Gomme, 50), the 452 Acharneis are just under 3.7%. This is surprisingly close—only 0.7% less—to the 4.4% which the quota of 22 for the *boulê* implies for 508/7 B.C. The numbers of men involved are large enough to have meaning. Out of the 1,125 demesmen known for Oeneis, the 452 Acharneis are 40.2%, which is 3.8% under the 44% representation, but still close enough to be confirmatory. In short, Gomme's count of names, which he did not use in this connection, powerfully strengthens the value of the bouleutic quota as an index of size. It is even more notable that the count of names does *not* suggest that the Acharneis had come to exceed the figure on the basis of which Cleisthenes fixed the quota. Along with the quota, the count of names firmly opposes any notion that the Acharneis had more citizens than the bouleutic quota indicates.

Other Data on Acharnae. *Ephêboi* of ca. 330 B.C. are known in a list which is almost complete (W. K. Pritchett, *Hesperia*, Suppl. viii, pages 273-78): out of 53-55 *ephêboi* of Oeneis, 24-26 (correct Gomme's 22-24) were from Acharnae. This again is strikingly confirmatory: 24 is 45.3% of 53.

Other information is less exact. In 1933 (*Population*, 44-45) Gomme compiled the data on grave monuments. Acharneis then provided almost 50% more grave monuments than any other deme. Out of a (then) total of 51 for Acharneis, 11 were found near the site, 22 in Athens or Piraeus; 16 were of unknown

provenience. Now at least 77 grave monuments of Acharneis are published (*IG II²*.5778–5854). Several are sculptured monuments, i.e. they belonged to rich people. In the group of 77, most were found in or near Athens; evidently many Acharneis resided outside the deme. On the other hand, although there was some exploration of a likely site in the last century (A. Milchhoefer, *Karten von Attika*, 2.42–44), no local excavation has been undertaken.

Apart from its (large) agricultural resources, which took the Spartans some time to ravage, Acharnae had the wealth Parnes could provide: wood, and among its products charcoal; extensive grazing; honey. The prosperity of the fifth century B.C., which by 431 had raised the Athenian population to its highest level in classical times, must have provided a market greedy for all that Acharnae could produce.⁷

Rich or not, populous or not, Acharnae included few citizens who became famous or even well known. Peisander the oligarch is the only born citizen of note that I can find; Pasion the wealthy banker, who bought estates in three demes, enrolled in Acharnae when he received citizenship. It is a poor showing, even when allowance is made for the fact that in the fifth century few Athenians from country demes became prominent.⁸

Under the Roman Empire, Acharnae continued to be large (see the index to *IG III*). Marathon then had by far the most

⁷ The principal source of wealth was of course agrarian. The town itself was up on the slopes (*Archidamus descended* to the plain), and to it belonged presumably large tracts on Parnes—there were the grazing, bee-keeping, and charcoal burning. But no unusually large population could be supported by these activities. It is a necessary assumption, and it accords with the trittys-name *Pedieis*, that some big section of the plain also belonged to Acharnae, and was the main source of its wealth. Gomme (*Com.* 2, page 73, with refs.) notes that this was part of the area where the lands of the nobility were particularly to be found.

So large and prosperous a town should have attracted shop-keepers, craftsmen, and others, metics as well as citizens, not to mention the slaves most of them would own. In the present article, except where it is otherwise stated, the non-citizen population of Acharnae is disregarded. J. A. O. Larsen has urged that if non-citizens be counted as well as citizens, the Piraeus by 431 B.C. may have been more populous than Acharnae (*Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* [Berkeley 1955] 7). Apart from Thucydides' statement, there is no way of knowing. Piraeus had only ten *bouleutai*, but a population doubtless uniquely large of metics, etc.

⁸ It has not been remarked before, but may be worth remarking, that whereas Aristophanes and his audience loved personal matter, and whereas it would seem that two or three well-known Acharneis could at least be mentioned in the play, for jokes or jibes or praise, none is. If there had been any outstanding Acharnian leader, Thucydides also might well have mentioned him. Evidently there was none.

enrollments; Acharnae was one of a dozen or so demes in the next smaller size. Compact, evidently, enough so as to be indivisible, Acharnae remained undivided and in Oeneis from Cleisthenes to the end. It was too big a deme to be put into any new tribe.

Near Acharnae, in the Mycenaean period, was built one of the finest *tholos* tombs known in Attica. It proves the ancient wealth of the region. In modern times also, the populousness of Acharnae has remained a fact. "Menidi is a large town of 2,000 inhabitants" (Baedeker's *Guide*, 1909).

There is more direct evidence, but it may be helpful to add data on the rest of the tribe. From the count of names, Oeneis appears not to have been one of the largest tribes: whereas the average is 1,228, Oeneis has only 1,125, only two tribes being smaller. Accidents of discovery, however, play a part here.

We do not know, but it is possible that several of the other demes of Oeneis—12, totalling 673 known demesmen—may have had soil and other means of support so meager that they themselves were necessarily poor (were *thêtes*, that is, for the most part) as well as few:

	DEME	KNOWN DEMESMEN	BOULEUTIC QUOTAS TO 307/6
<i>City trittys</i>	Boutadae	36	1
	Epicephisia	42	1-2
	Hippotomadae	12	1
	Laciadae	97	3-2
	Lousieis	30	1
	Oethen	105	6-7
	Perithoedae	69	3
	Pteleasii	23	1
TOTAL		414	16
<i>Coast trittys</i>	Thriasii	101	7
	Cothocidae	57	1-2
	Phylasii	83	2
	? Tyrmeidae	18	1
TOTAL		259	12
12 demes		673	28

Apart from the notion that Aristophanes' charcoal-burners were not men of means, there is no way of knowing how many of

the Acharneis were so well off as to be *hippeis* and *hoplitai*. *Thêtes* were also citizens and might get their names into inscriptions and so into our figure 452. Of course also the demesmen, including the 452, did not necessarily all live in Acharnae after the time of first registration in 508 B.C.; we have seen that many did not. Thus the argument about natural wealth is not decisive. The same consideration applies in reverse to Boutadae and the rest: if the soil were poor, most of the Boutadae can have moved elsewhere and some may have become affluent. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that the coast trittyes may have provided more than its numerical share of rowers (*thêtes*), and likewise the city trittyes: in general, the larger part of the *hoplitai* will be from inland trittyes. It is true however that the coast and city trittyes of Oeneis each included much farmland.

III. THUCYDIDES ON ACHARNAE

The Context in Thucydides. The discussion thus far has shown that Acharnae contained many more citizens than any other Athenian deme; that even so it cannot have contained half as many as 3,000 *hoplitai*;⁹ but that there is no plausible way of emending the text of Thucydides as the MSS. unanimously present it. Clear enough after Gomme wrote *Population*, and clearer now, there is no larger *proved* numerical error in Thucydides. The temptation is strong simply to disregard it. But the day when scholars played fast and loose with texts, by emendation or otherwise, has long since passed. To do so in the present instance without full exploration of alternatives would, I think, be deplorable.

If we turn to the text of Thucydides, the first passage to take up is the very one containing the number. Thucydides alleges—we need not argue how truthfully—that Archidamus considered the size of Acharnae to be an important strategic consideration in his war of nerves: οἱ Ἀχαρνῆς μέγα μέρος ὄντες τῆς πόλεως (τρισχίλιοι

⁹ If the total of all citizens and metics of hoplite census and over, of 18 years and up, including the aged, was as much as 32,000, then 4.4% would be 1,408. Allow Acharnae a disproportionately large number in these groups, and the result, with all the evidence strained to the utmost, might be ca. 1,600. This is 400 more than Gomme (*supra*), who was firmly convinced that Thucydides had in mind only fighting men. It is argued in the present section that Thucydides, for effect, was including absolutely every possible man.

γὰρ ὀπλῖται ἐγένοντο). The expression *mega meros* has never been properly weighed. Without the parenthesis it would be effective; and one may believe that Thucydides never wrote the parenthesis. But the parenthesis adds a detail of great additional effectiveness because it is concrete. It would not be effective, but weak, if the number given were much smaller: "for the Acharneis provided 1,100 *hoplitai*" (i.e. 1,100 out of 30,000); or, "for the Acharneis constituted 4.4% of all the Athenians." 4.4% may indicate, to a modern scholar, a large deme; but to an ancient reader it would be ludicrous to call such a fraction a *mega meros*. Hence if *trischilioi* must be emended to give a true figure, *mega meros* ought to be emended also. It can be retained only on the assumption that it is highly, indeed unconvincingly, rhetorical.

This, however, is not the end of the matter. Acharnae is mentioned as importantly large in the calculations of Archidamus. He hoped, by causing distress for them, and for them alone (no others being mentioned), that they would cause a division among the Athenians. Either the Acharneis would succeed in provoking a battle or, once their town and farms were destroyed, they would have numbers and influence enough to dissuade the rest from action, so that Archidamus could ravage at will (2.20.3-4). Obviously a small minority could do something of this, but a large minority—3,000 *hoplitai*—might be really powerful.

Be this as it may, the unrest provoked by the (visible) destruction of Acharnae was in fact so great as to be, in Pericles' judgment, dangerous. He prevented action: ἐκκλησίαν τε οὐκ ἐποίει αὐτῶν οὐδὲ ξύλλογον οὐδένα (2.22.1). In this unrest the Acharneis are stated specifically to have had a large part, precisely because of their numbers: οἱ τε Ἀχαρνῆς οἴμενοι παρὰ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἐλαχίστην μοῖραν εἶναι Ἀθηναίων, κτλ. (2.21.3).

In short, it would seem that the one parenthesis ought not to be attacked in isolation. Not Archidamus' strategy alone, but the actual reported effect in Athens, needs to be considered. The whole hangs together, and, it seems fair to say, the number 3,000 is what makes it strong and convincing. Reservations may be entertained, certainly, with respect to how much Thucydides knew about Archidamus' thoughts. Again, the whole may be put down as an instance of excessive personalization, which was dear to the classical writer and reader. Such considerations are

beside the point. The point is that to reduce or to omit the large number is to cripple the narrative.

Unless this view is mistaken, the context, not previously studied in this connection, is decisive for the parenthesis. The number 3,000 can neither be emended nor disregarded. Thucydides wrote that the *hoplitai* of Acharnae numbered 3,000.

Thucydides in the Light of the Parenthesis. Opinions may differ, without objective recourse, on how in consequence to judge Thucydides. There is something to be said on his side. First of all, the dimensions of his work as a whole are so plainly tremendous, and its accuracy in thousands of details so probable, that gross inaccuracy in one detail should not be unduly magnified. The tendency, moreover, to exaggerate the size of whatever is largest in human affairs—cities, personal fortunes, etc.—is natural and universal. Acharnae, much the largest deme in fact, may well have been popularly regarded as far larger than it really was.

Possibly Aristophanes had been a factor. When he wanted to write a comedy about the discontent of the rural population shut up inside the walls of Athens, he had chosen the deme Acharnae. He needed a place that was in sight from Athens, and he needed a place with characteristic and picturesque detail, such as charcoal-burners. No doubt other demes also provided some such things. Acharnae was the first to be ravaged. But it was chosen in part at least because it was much bigger than any of the others in sight, its demesmen would be familiar in the city, they would naturally influence opinion—because of their wealth, and their staunch character, doubtless, but also because of their numbers. The Acharneis had been made conspicuous, and so everyone, including Thucydides, thought of them as numerous.

Big numbers, to the Greeks, were not the same as to us. Not only Herodotus but also Xenophon often became giddy when they dealt with big numbers: *myrioi* was often not fact but rhetoric. The number 3,000 is not only round; it frequently recurs as one of the exaggerated big numbers. A Greek reader might not have to be told not to press for exactitude when he saw “3,000” in such a context; he might have an inkling that it could stand for 2,950, or 2,750, or even—who knows?—2,500 or less.

Thucydides had been a general, and generals ought to know military enrolments. We cannot tell how exact, or rather how

closely approximate, an Athenian general's knowledge of the numbers of military forces really was. The relevant data are not clear and adequate, and they cannot be discussed here in any detail. The common method of raising a force was to call up a specified series of the 42 annual classes. The approximate sizes of these classes were doubtless known. The men were scattered, of course, in the 140 demes. There was never an occasion for calling up *all* 42 annual classes from any *one* deme. Lists were kept, but clerically the Greeks, by modern standards, were lazy; and they lacked an abundance of paper and modern office equipment. How often did anyone go through all the 42 lists of Acharneis to make an accurate count of the hundreds of names? We can doubt that it was often. There was no obvious motive.

So much by way of trying to excuse. It adds up to something, but not, I think, to complete exculpation. Thucydides had put the total hoplite force at ca. 30,000. Surely if pressed he would have had to admit that Acharnae could not provide a tenth of it, a full tribal quota. For the sake of his narrative in this instance he exaggerated wildly. There is the dark fact that by explaining that Acharnae was the largest of what *were called* "*demes*" (2.19.2), Thucydides makes it clear that he was writing for others besides Athenians, i.e. for persons who could be expected not to be able to check him up.

But to think of Thucydides in this connection as plotting how he could deceive people would be to misunderstand him, and to fail to grasp one of his most interesting characteristics. Filled with his theme, and with the desire to impress the reader, he was carried by enthusiasm into gross overstatement. The part of his mind which had a keen feeling about truth was too weak to resist and was overborne. This could happen the more easily because the majority of his readers would be non-Athenian; but doubtless most Athenian readers would swallow his statistics. Only a few, stopping to think, would realize how gross the error was.

Altogether it is a severe indictment, and a revolutionary one. "In the narrative, if not in the speeches, Thucydides has maintained an ideal of absolute and rigidly tested truth." This sentence, which reflects the *communis opinio*, stands unaltered in the second printing of a book on Thucydides by my distinguished colleague, J. H. Finley, Jr. The book is largely based on the speeches, and the qualification about them is valuable.

Though often the victim of theorists, Thucydides was a realistic historian, and he will never be understood in isolation from facts. But even A. W. Gomme was not sufficiently critical. In his *Commentary on Thucydides* I, after a four-page discussion of the figures for the campaign of Sybota, Gomme says (page 194): "There are many other cases in which his narrative is incomplete; but that is not to say that it is ever absurd." About Acharnae and an exaggeration of the order of 200%, Thucydides may or may not properly be called "absurd." He was never (I should word it) "transparently absurd."

The ultimate verdict will depend largely on how many comparable instances can be proved. Certainly Thucydides could err. I think he did so, as here, in the hot enthusiasm of narrative or argument. To set him, alone of Greek historians, on a pedestal; to read him always on bended knee; to find in his pages an inhuman perfection, is to fail to understand him. He was more interesting than that.