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SACRILEGE IN THE SANCTUARY: THUCYDIDEAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE VIOLATION OF SACRED SPACE DURING THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

by

SUZANNE Y. TRYON

Under the Direction of Louis A. Ruprecht Jr.

ABSTRACT

Few have paid attention to the role that pan-Hellenic religious norms play in Thucydides's *The Peloponnesian War*. This thesis investigates the trope of religious sacrilege in the form of violated sacred space. By examining how this trope functions within his chosen rhetorical presentation, I will argue that a secular interpretation of Thucydides does not accord with what he tries to accomplish within his narrative, and that scenes describing such sacrilege actually function in crucial ways to support a major premise of his work. Two specific instances of sacrilege will be examined: the civil war on Corcyra in 427 BCE; and the Battle of Delion in 424/3 BCE. I will demonstrate that Thucydides incorporates sacrilege to serve as evidence for his readers that the Peloponnesian War was the worst war the Greek-speaking world had ever

experienced, and that religio-cultural norms, however unanimously conceived and internally obvious, are inherently fragile and unstable.

INDEX WORDS: Thucydides, Peloponnesian War, Sacrilege, Corcyra, Delion

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

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Suzanne Yvonne Tryon
2011

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, both for instilling in me the love of learning and for convincing me that I belonged in graduate school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to all the members of my committee. I thank Dr. Ruprecht for the care with which he reviewed multiple drafts of this thesis, for suggesting that I read Thucydides in the first place, and for helping me to find the big picture when I constantly found myself lost in the details. I thank Dr. Pendrick for making Greek fun (not an easy task) and for puzzling through passages of Thucydides with me. Finally, but not least, I thank Dr. Bassett for the best methods class (Icons) that I have taken during my university career, and I can only hope that what I learned is reflected in this thesis. Anything useful to be gleaned from this thesis emerged through their patience and guidance, and any mistakes or misinterpretations I claim solely as my own.

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1 INTRODUCTION

> Again, I merely record the current story, without guaranteeing the truth of it. It may, however, be true enough….
>
> -Herodotus[1]

> And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible.
>
> -Thucydides[2]

Reading *The Peloponnesian War* in the summer of 2010 was my first exposure to Thucydides. I devoured the text greedily, both because I enjoyed the tale he had to tell about what he considered the greatest war in the Greek-speaking world, and also because I had finally stumbled upon the topic I wished to explore in my master's thesis. Depictions of sacrilege in sacred spaces occur repeatedly throughout Thucydides's text, and I made it my goal to investigate how this trope was functioning in his narrative. I was surprised to learn that the traditional, post-Enlightenment conception of Thucydides as an historian was one that took him to be an historian of *Realpolitik*, disinterested in or dismissive of traditional Greek religious norms. This has led to him being viewed as a secular historian with "scientific" standards of objectivity similar to those of modern academic historians. There is much to support this interpretation, but it requires ignoring precisely those passages I found most interesting. These labels – secular, scientific, rationalist - are clearly anachronistic, and can possess only marginal value when applied to pre-Enlightenment historical figures like Thucydides.

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[1] *The Histories*, trans. Selincourt, 335.

[2] *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans Crawley, 1.22.2. All future quotes from Thucydides will be from Crawley's translation as provided in Robert B Strassler's *The Landmark Thucydides* (1996) unless otherwise noted, and I will only cite book, chapter, and line numbers. Other translations to which I frequently refer are done by Rex Warner (1954) and Charles Foster Smith (1951). I prefer Strassler's text, however, for its clarity and accessibility, despite some problems such as the perplexing insistence on referring to "nations," which I will discuss at a later moment in section 2.

If we approach Thucydides while trying conscientiously to suspend these modern assumptions, a new picture emerges. It becomes much easier to see how the repeated trope of what I am calling "sacrilege in the sanctuary" functions within his narrative, and it is harder to dismiss these scenes merely as examples of Thucydides's denigration of pan-Hellenic religion. In fact, I will argue that he includes such scenes for precisely the opposite reason: the scenes of sacrilege possess searing violence, functioning as symbols meant to make his audience realize exactly how desperate things became during the Peloponnesian War. Sacrilege only works as a symbol when there is an understood consensus that certain boundaries should not be crossed, and textual evidence suggests that Thucydides felt that violating sanctuaries was one such transgression. Many important passages in Thucydides deal with the violation of pan-Hellenic values and customs (*nomoi*) as they relate to pan-Hellenic conceptions of sacred space. Therefore, I intend to explore the role played by the recurring trope of the violation of sacred space as a part of Thucydides' rhetorical strategy serving the larger purpose of his history. He intentionally develops these episodes to support a central claim of his work: that the Peloponnesian War was the largest, the longest, and the most destructive war that had occurred up to that point in the Greek-speaking world. Thucydides was not moved to write his history only by the sheer mass of mobilized soldiers or resulting casualties. It was also the collapse of pan-Hellenic mores that suggested to Thucydides that the tragic moral and social consequences of the war were greater than any the Greeks had previously experienced. Ultimately, the very things that were supposed to provide unity to the Greek-speaking world proved to be inherently fragile and unequal to the task of restraining the types of violence they were meant to hold in check.

Interpreting Thucydides is a daunting task for several reasons. First, scholars know little about the man who wrote *The Peloponnesian War*. His account provides the most thorough

source of information available to present-day scholars concerning the brutal, twenty-seven year war between two Greek city-states, Athens and Sparta, and their respective allies, in the final third of the 5th century BCE. Though Thucydides records in scrupulous detail the first twenty-one years of military and political activities among the warring Greek city-states, he rarely mentions himself, except for a brief introduction in the first sentence of his history: "Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians…"[3] He makes an appearance only twice more during the narrative, even though he was a participant in the war. One appearance is in reference to suffering from the plague that devastated the Athenian population during the early years of the war,[4] and he mentions himself again when he is blamed and exiled by the Athenians for losing a valuable colony to Spartan aggression.[5] Historians surmise from his father's name, Olorus, that Thucydides possessed an aristocratic Thracian pedigree, though he was an Athenian citizen, and they suspect that he derived most of his wealth from gold mines located on family property in the Thracian mountains.[6] The war broke out in 431 BCE, when Thucydides would have been approximately thirty years old.[7] In 424 BCE, he was elected to the position of *strategos* (general), one of ten powerful men in charge of the Athenian military. He was exiled in that same year when forces under his control lost Amphipolis, a colony in the northeast of Greece that belonged to Athens, because of the campaigns of the Spartan general Brasidas. It was during his exile that Thucydides began to write *The Peloponnesian*

---

[3] 1.1.1.

[4] While describing the outbreak of the plague, he writes, "All speculation as to its origins and causes, if causes can be found adequate to produce so great a disturbance, I leave to other writers, whether lay or professional; for myself, I shall simply set down its nature, and explain the symptoms by which perhaps it may be recognized by the student, if it should ever break out again. *This I can the better do, as I had the disease myself*, and watched its operation in the case of others." 2.48.3, italics mine.

[5] "It was also my fate to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis." 5.26.5.

[6] V. D. Hanson, "Introduction" in *The Landmark Thucydides*, edited by Strassler, *ix*.

[7] "I lived through the whole of it, being of an age to comprehend events, and giving my attention to them in order to know the exact truth about them." 5.26.5.

War, a fact that presumably gave him access to valuable sources from all sides of the conflict.[8] Once the war ended in 404 BCE with the complete surrender of Athens to its rival Sparta, many scholars assume that he returned to Athens to finish his book and died in his native city. The exact date or cause of death is unknown.[9]

In addition to our having only a basic outline of Thucydides's personal life, the history he left us is one of the most difficult and complex of Greek texts for scholars to translate. Thucydides appears to be a methodical and careful historian; but his obscure, often ambiguous prose has provided readers with centuries of consternation and confusion. To get his story across, he "juggled tenses in a sophisticated way, piled up subordinate clauses and resorted to other devices that are often the despair of modern readers."[10] Compared with contemporary writers from the 5th century BCE in Athens, he is seen to have a penchant for abstract nouns, to demonstrate a preference for archaic and even poetic expressions, and routinely to invert the normal word order of Greek prose. Added to this rhetorical complexity is the fact that the text as extant is incomplete. It ends abruptly in Book Eight, in mid-sentence, during the twenty-first year of the twenty-seven year conflict, which suggests that Thucydides may have died before he could finish his history. Many scholars suspect that portions of *The Peloponnesian War* are unfinished, due to the fact that they possess less polish than the majority of the text. This makes it difficult to know where Thucydides was ultimately going with his narrative, given that he probably lacked the time to complete it.[11]

Essentially, his history is a chronological record of the conflict known as the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE), a war involving two powerful competing Greek city-states, Athens and

---

[8] "[A]nd being present with both parties, and more especially with the Peloponnesians by reason of my exile, I had leisure to observe affairs more closely." 5.26.5.
[9] M. I. Finley, "Introduction" in *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (1954) 9-13.
[10] Ibid., 10.
[11] Victor Davis Hanson, "Introduction" in *The Landmark Thucydides*, edited by Robert B Strassler (1996) xiv.

Sparta and their respective allies. The war is sometimes framed as an inevitable and unavoidable clash between the Hellenic superpowers with both seeking economic and political dominance and representing rival political ideologies. Though most of the Greek city-states (*poleis*) were autonomous (a fact reflected in the various systems of government they developed), the two most common systems were democracy and oligarchy.[12] Athens claimed its status as the preeminent democracy and possessed a naval empire portrayed in Thucydides's account as adventurous, innovative, and swift to capitalize on good fortune. It was also the leader of the Delian League, founded in 477 BCE in the wake of the Persian Wars (490-479 BCE). At its height, one hundred and fifty allies contributed money or ships to a nominally collective enterprise, though it soon became apparent that the Athenians treated their allies more like subjects. The immense tribute and prestige Athens acquired through its naval empire inspired fear and distrust among other powerful city-states. The most powerful of these, Sparta, was an oligarchy, a regime whose strength was founded on its formidable hoplite army. They were characterized as more conservative than the Athenians, slow to act and reluctant to commit. They led the Peloponnesian League, a collective of allied city-states whose members included Corinth, Aegina, and Thebes, all traditional enemies of the Athenians.[13] However, Thucydides rejects the notion that Athens, Sparta, and their respective allies were destined to fight by ideological differences. Rather, he lays the blame for the war upon naked ambition and jealousy:

> [Calamities] came upon them with the late war, which was begun by the Athenians and Peloponnesians with the dissolution of the Thirty Years Peace made after the conquest of Euboea. To the question why they broke the treaty, I answer by placing first an account of their grounds of complaint and points of difference, that no one may ever have to ask the immediate cause which plunged the Hellenes into a war of such magnitude. The real cause, however, I consider to be one

[12] I reference Aristotle for a discussion on the differences between democratic and oligarchic constitutions: "[I]t is a democracy when those who are free are in the majority and have sovereignty over the government, and an oligarchy when the rich and more well born are few and sovereign." *Politics* IV.III.8-11, trans. by H. Rackham (1932).
[13] Hale. *Lords of the Sea*, 83-5.

> which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable.[14]

In other words, it was ultimately Spartan nervousness and its envy of growing Athenian power that unleashed a war of epic proportions.

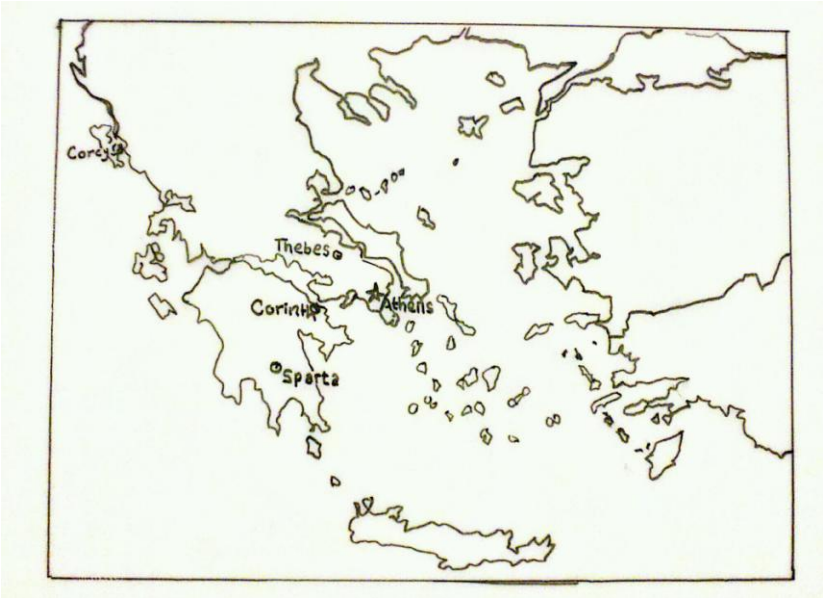

Figure 1.1 The Greek-speaking world during the Peloponnesian War

Thucydides tells us that it is his goal to record the events of this war without having to resort to the more quixotic embellishments of poets and other historians. He is candid when it comes to explaining how he plans to accomplish this:

> On the whole, however, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied upon. Assuredly, they will not be disturbed either by the verse of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense; the subjects they treat being out of reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend.[15]

He wanted to provide a history that used only verifiable evidence, largely consisting of eye-witness accounts, reports which did not explain human actions for the most part with reference to the gods. Because of his assiduous attention to natural phenomena and his thorough descriptions

[14] 1.23.3-6.
[15] 1.21.1.

of troop movements and political developments, scholars have often accepted Thucydides's claim to objectivity in reporting the events of the war, despite his candid confession to the artfulness of his presentation. Later, he reveals:

> With references to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been *to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions*, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.[16]

I shall argue that the introduction of the subject of religious norms is a regular feature of what Thucydides deemed was demanded "by the various occasions."

It was common for Early Modern European and North American scholars to project their own scientific values onto the ancient Athenian. He was conceived as the first modern historian, the first writer to transcend his local circumstances and to achieve logical, rational objectivity in his writing. Thomas Hobbes – the author of *Leviathon* (1651), but also one of the first to translate Thucydides into English (1628) – remarks that Thucydides "is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ."[17] In *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), Nietzsche vastly prefers Thucydides's style to that of the more idealistic philosophy of the Socratic schools: "My recreation, my predilection, my *cure* for all Platonism has always been *Thucydides*. Thucydides and, maybe, Machiavelli's prince are most closely related to me by their unconditional will to fabricate nothing and to see reason in *reality – not* in 'reason,' and still less in 'morality'."[18] Donald Kagan, a leading contemporary authority on Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War, writes in his most recently published book, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History* (2009), that "Thucydides seems to have taken a spectacular leap into modernity."[19]

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[16] 1.22.1, my italics.
[17] Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History*, 229.
[18] *Twilight of the Idols*. 87.
[19] Kagan, *Thucydides:The Reinvention of History*, 9.

These characterizations, warranted up to a point, can be misleading. They are in large part inspired by Thucydides himself. He invites this interpretation through his own ironic juxtaposition of his methods with those of Herodotus, an earlier Greek historian. Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus on the coast of Asia Minor sometime between 490 and 480 BCE and traveled widely, describing the events that led to the Persian invasion of the Greek mainland, and attempted to explain how it was that a relatively small group of independent Greek cities had come to repel the largest empire known to him. His account came to be called simply *The Histories*, and it earned him the title "Father of History," a title first used by Cicero.[20] It was after Herodotus and through his influence that *historia* gained new meaning: "Before Herodotus, it had meant no more than 'inquiry' or 'research'…. After him, it designated a new branch of human intellectual endeavor: the quest to compile a record of events that would uncover root causes and recurring patterns."[21]

Herodotus was simultaneously condemned by other ancient figures as the "Father of Lies" for his willingness to include every story told to him with no apparent concern for accuracy; he often left it to the reader to judge the validity of his reports.[22] As a result, Herodotus's account is filled with references to fantastical beings and gods interacting in human history and affecting events. In contrast, Thucydides wants to report on events he lived through and witnessed himself, relying on eyewitness and first-hand accounts when he could not be present. He deliberately contrasts his work to that of Herodotus when he claims, "The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest….I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time."[23] Lucian of Sama-

[20] Evans, "Father of History or the Father of Lies: The Reputation of Herodotus," 11.
[21] Hale, *Lords of the Sea*, 134-5.
[22] Evans, "Father of History or the Father of Lies: The Reputation of Herodotus," 11.
[23] 1.22.4.

sota (c. 125-c.180 CE) reported a specific instance in which Herodotus supposedly read his *Histories* aloud at an Olympic contest: "He seized the moment when the gathering was at its fullest, and every city had sent the flower of its citizens; then he appeared in the temple hall… he recited his *Histories,* and bewitched his hearers."[24] His rambling narrative certainly seemed opportune for an oral setting. This is not to imply that Thucydides' account was never read aloud, but rather that "he want[ed] it to be thought of as a possession for ever *rather than* a prize recitation."[25] He believed that he was doing something fundamentally different than Herodotus. In the centuries after the golden age of Classical Greek writers, Greek, Roman, and European historians consciously molded their histories after Thucydides, rather than Herodotus' more fantastical mode of reporting.

Nevertheless, we should be careful about accepting uncritically Thucydides's own claims and the ways in which they have been interpreted. After spending months reading and working closely with his text, I am convinced that Thucydides developed a brilliant and novel approach to historical reporting in *The Peloponnesian War*. However, he is more than just a reporter of the Peloponnesian War; he is involved in crafting events to portray his own interpretation of the war. His work fell prey to the same problems with memory that Herodotus encountered, even though he attended to current events and Herodotus looked to the days of a previous generation. For that reason, it is important to remember that academic 'history' as practiced in the modern university was a discipline that did not yet exist and would not for thousands of years. During Thucydides' time, *historia* did not yet signify the technical genre 'history' of modern academic history, and

[24] "Herodotus and Aetion," translated by H. W. Fowler, (91).
[25] Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides: Volume I,* 61.

the 'historian' only became a professional occupation in the late 19th century. It would be wrong to treat him as though scientific objectivity as it is understood now was his goal.[26]

Thucydides advances a clear argument or agenda in his history, revealing why he chose to record his account of the Peloponnesian War for future generations. He believes his subject to be more massive in scope and duration than any war the Greek-speaking world had previously experienced. Such an astounding claim brings the Trojan or Persian Wars to mind, two legendary wars in Greek history remembered with much pride and patriotism by the ancient Greeks. This comparison explains why the first book of Thucydides's history - traditionally called "the Archaeology," for its extensive description of the early settlement and rise of the Greek-speaking world - is dedicated to proving the comparative weakness of earlier Greek military endeavors. He asserts that the Greek expedition to Troy was the largest of its time, but that it could not compete with the armies or navies of his own day. The Homeric Greeks lacked the funds to support a large invading force: "[W]ant of money proved the weakness of earlier expeditions."[27] The second Persian war he acknowledges as the greatest action preceding his own, but dismisses it as inferior, because it "found a speedy decision in two actions by sea and two by land."[28] In contrast to the smaller forces involved in the Trojan War, and the shorter duration of the Persian wars, the Peloponnesian War lasted for twenty-seven years, and by the end of it, very little of the Greek-speaking world had been left unaffected. The extent of the conflict, the savagery of the engagements, and the raw destructive power of those events left a mark on Thucydides; sacrilegious violence in religious sanctuaries provides the symbol that captures the catastrophic violence most eloquently.

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[26] Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History*, 1-21.
[27] 1.11.2.
[28] 1.23.1.

2 RELIGION IN THUCYDIDES

According to Donald Kagan, Thucydides "wrote for an anonymous audience in the future, intending his history to teach valuable general truths."[29] He did not try to limit himself to a mere recording of facts and numbers like many assume; he was interested in examining the social consequences of the war. Rather than being uninterested in Greek religion, as many believe, there appear to be times when he harnesses common knowledge of sacred *nomoi* (laws/customs) and uses their violation as evidence for the savagery and unnaturalness of the war.[30] He is able to use the violation of religious norms such as sacred asylum (*asylia*) and resulting ritual pollution (*miasma*) to illustrate for his readers the unraveling of the social and religious fabric during intense periods of violence. Let us turn to the so-called Peace of Nicias to examine how skillfully Thucydides wrestles with these issues.

The Peace of Nicias in 421 BCE [see Appendix] created a momentary respite in what would eventually prove to be nearly two decades of intense internecine warfare. It established a cease-fire between Athens and Sparta after almost ten years of episodic fighting. Both parties had reasons for desiring peace. Cleon and Brasidas, who in Thucydides' estimation were "the two principle opponents of peace on either side," were killed in a battle outside of Amphipolis in 422 BCE.[31] Athens, embarrassed after a rout at the battle of Delion, desired to reacquire her recently lost colony at Amphipolis, and Sparta was desperate to regain the one hundred and twenty hoplites taken captive on the isle of Sphacteria in 425 BCE. The peace was designed to last for fifty years, and each side would return any conquered cities and prisoners as restitution to their

[29] Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History*, 227.
[30] See Nano Marinatos' *Thucydides and Religion* for a thorough overview of secular scholarly interpretations of Thucydides.
[31] 5.16.2.

mother *polis.*[32] The Peace of Nicias represented a high point in the war for the Athenians: their empire was still intact, and Sparta appeared neutralized.

As a means for ending hostilities, the Peace of Nicias was a miserable failure. It was officially terminated after six years in the spring of 415 - hardly the fifty years its authors had envisioned – though in reality, the spirit of the treaty was never upheld. Thucydides argues that the treaty was "treacherous," and that when "looked at in the light of the facts it cannot, it will be found, be rationally considered a state of peace."[33] Most of Sparta's allies, chief among them the Boeotians, refused to entertain the idea of peace with Athens, whose empire had simply grown too large and powerful for their comfort. As a result, they were constantly seeking ways to encourage Sparta to renew the war and destroy the Athenian empire once and for all. As for the Athenians, their primary motive for making peace with Sparta was to regain their colony at Amphipolis. It was a source of timber for their navy, and acted as a buffer to Spartan passage through Thrace. Hostilities were renewed at the Battle of Mantineia in 418 BCE after both sides failed to uphold the provisions of the treaty.[34]

One of the few treaties that Thucydides quotes in his history, the Peace of Nicias treaty between Sparta and Athens remains an invaluable piece of evidence, revealing to us one way in which Greek identity was understood in the ancient world. As a means for investigating who exactly is included in the Greek–speaking world (*Hellenikon*), the treaty highlights for readers certain religious customs which were supposed to be protected from violation by both sides.[35] According to Thucydides, the peace treaty contained eleven articles, the first two of which read as follows:

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[32] Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition*, 1-12.
[33] 5.26.2-3.
[34] Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition*, 15.
[35] 1.1.7, *Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Liddell and Scott, 9th edition. Lidell offers "the Greeks *collectively*" as another possible translation. Henceforth, I shall refer to this source by the abbreviation LSJ.

- Regarding the national temples (τα ιερα κοινα), there shall be a free passage by land and by sea to all who wish it, to sacrifice, travel, consult, and attend the oracle or games, according to the customs of their country.
- The temple and shrine of Apollo at Delphi and the Delphinians shall be governed by their own laws, taxed by their own state, and judged by their own judges, the land and the people, according to the customs of their country (τα πατρια).[36]

In the above passage, Crawley translates *koina* (κοινα) as national. However, this is problematic, because this is a time that predates the concept of the nation-state. Hobbes translated *koina* as "public," which reflects more accurately the sense in which the Greeks used the term. Liddell and Scott recommend "common," "general," and "mutual" as other possible renderings for *koina*.[37] The treaty refers to temples that the Greek-speaking world held in common, major sanctuaries that functioned in a pan-Hellenic capacity. For most of its early history, the Greek-speaking world was a politically fragmented territory, with allegiance owed to native city-states, the characteristic form of political organization among the Greeks. These city-states were called *poleis (polis*: singular; *poleis*: plural). George Forrest defines the *polis* as "a community of citizens (adult males), citizens without political rights (women and children), and non-citizens (resident foreigners and slaves), a defined body, occupying a defined area, living under a defined or definable constitution, independent of outside authority to an extent that allowed enough of its members to feel they were independent."[38] Clearly, it is anachronistic to speak of "Greece" or "national" temples in the fifth century BCE if one understands "nation" as it is used in contemporary politics, though this does not mean that the ancient Greek-speaking peoples were wholly distinct from one another. The kind of solidarity they did possess, however tenuous, was a common sense of what constituted sacred space and its violation.

[36] 5.18.3-9.
[37] LSJ, sv.
[38] G. Forrest as quoted in J. Boardman, *Greece and the Hellenistic World*, 13.

Thucydides expresses difficulties with defining who qualifies as a "Greek," though he manages to locate some general features. He begins his history by examining the settlement of Hellas and writes:

> Before the Trojan war there is no indication of any common action in Hellas, nor indeed of the universal presence of the name…. The best proof of this is furnished by Homer. Born long after the Trojan war, he nowhere calls all of them by that name, nor indeed any of them except the followers of Achilles from Pthiotis, who were the original Hellenes; in his poems they are called Danaans, Argives, and Achaeans. He does not even use the term barbarian, probably because the Hellenes had not yet been marked off from the rest of the world by one distinctive name.[39]

He ends by concluding that 'Hellenes' refers to "both those who took on the name city by city, as the result of a common language, and those who later were all called by the common name."[40] One of the primary bonds Thucydides discerns in such a loose confederation of city-states is language. Political disunity did not prevent a Hellenic identity from forming in the spheres of language as well as religion. Pan-Hellenism is the broad label used by scholars to refer to this religious ethos connecting "a group of cities and tribes united by bonds of language and culture in Greece, on the Aegean Islands and along the coast of Asia Minor, together with their colonies from the Black Sea to Sicily, southern Italy, Marseilles, and Spain."[41] With this scale of geographical diversity, it would be misleading to view Greek culture as homogeneous, and Thucydides repeatedly acknowledges how diverse and fractured the ancient Greek-speaking world was. Citing squabbling city-states and covetous, small-minded tyrants as evidence, he argues that "for a long time everywhere in Hellas do we find causes which make the states alike incapable of combination for great and national ends."[42] Thucydides constantly encourages his readers to see that any notion of a politically unified Greek world is inherently fragile.

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[39] 1.3.2-4.
[40] *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by Warner, 1.3.4.
[41] Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 8.
[42] 1.17.6.

Nevertheless, Charles Freeman argues that "while individual city-states were creating their own political and social structures in the archaic age, Greek culture was developing an underlying cohesion through its shared religious beliefs."[43] The focal point of pan-Hellenism was not any sort of doctrinal creed or sacred text but rather the emergence of the pan-Hellenic sanctuary, often along with its accompanying structure, the temple or shrine. The primary function of a sanctuary -- set aside and apart from the *polis* -- was to provide space for ritual activities. These rituals were often repetitive, performed with the seasons, or meant to mark certain milestones in life such as the transition from childhood to adulthood. A sacrifice usually accompanied ritual ceremonies, and it was through this sacrifice that communication with the gods was possible.[44] The borders of a sanctuary were always clearly marked: "These boundaries marked out the core sacred space, which being sacred was inviolable….[I]t was a place where nothing might be damaged and no one might be harmed with impunity."[45] Either visible lines like a wall or invisible lines often provided by natural features such as distinguishing trees or landmarks indicated the boundary of sacred space. One Greek word for a sanctuary was *temenos*, "a place set aside," related to the verb *temno*, "to cut off." This suggests a clearly understood separation between the ordinary world and the sanctuary - sacred space dedicated to the gods.[46] It was divorced from all aspects of daily life, including the endemic violence which characterized so much of the activity between Greek city-states.

Many sanctuaries served only those residents in nearby cities or towns, but some sanctuaries became pivotal for establishing formal relations between communities and reinforcing "ideas and values central to polis organization (such as the adoption of law codes or hoplite war-

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[43] Freeman, *The Greek Achievement*, 126.
[44] Ibid., 131.
[45] Pedley, *Sanctuaries and the Sacred in the Ancient Greek World*, 57.
[46] Ibid., 29.

fare)."[47] Olympia and Delphi, two of the most famous sanctuaries in the ancient Greek world, developed a pan-Hellenic identity as early as the eighth century BCE in response to regional political and social needs. In a landscape carved into local territorial divisions, it was advantageous to have a neutral meeting place, since the sanctuaries were intended, at least in theory, to be autonomous from local political interference; though they were normally run and controlled by local cities, they were not cities themselves.

Even though the violation of sanctuaries was prohibited by pan-Hellenic *nomoi* – laws and customs purported to be respected by all Greeks - Thucydides describes such violations as occurring repeatedly throughout the course of the war. In an essay concerning Thucydides and religion, Borimir Jordan compiles a list of all passages referring to religious matters, finding a substantial number: sacred funds are contested; temple grounds are occupied by armies; and "sanctuaries and festivals are used and abused as military bases, pretexts, and occasions for launching aggression and perpetuating brutality."[48] Two incidents in particular are useful for elucidating the theme of the violation of sacred space. First, the revolt at Corcyra (Corfu) is singled out by Thucydides for its brutality and for the complete breakdown of social norms in evidence there. Refugee laws were broken, people were slain on temple altars, and the very language of moral norms was perverted. Second, at the Battle of Delion, the Athenians actually occupied and fortified the temple of Apollo in Boeotian territory, and it is because of their method of justifying this sacrilege that Thucydides ultimately condemns them.

I will argue that an examination of these two incidents reveals that Thucydides was not dismissive or inconsiderate of pan-Hellenic religious customs, as was commonly held by previous generations of secularist Thucydidean scholars. Rather, he used the violation of sacred

[47] Morgan, "The Origins of pan-Hellenism," 18.
[48] Jordan, *Religion in Thucydides,* 128.

space and sacred norms as a central image to express the horror of the events he witnessed: "The Peloponnesian War went on for a very long time and there occurred during it disasters of a kind and number that no other similar period of time could match."[49] The war fomented profound changes in Greek society. Thucydides attempts to highlight these changes for his readers as well as to communicate something about the fragile nature of Greek identity. If being Greek meant that there existed a loose set of religious norms which all held in common, then what should one conclude after these customs are transgressed repeatedly? The violation of the *temenos* of a sanctuary serves as a metaphor for an ethical and moral system repeatedly violated during the course of the war. By recounting violations of pan-Hellenic customs, Thucydides tries to show his readers just how cataclysmic were the times through which he lived and exposes just how fragile Greek norms proved to be.

[49] 1.23.2.

3 CIVIL WAR IN CORCYRA

Brute godlessness is all the rage:
Virtue tossed on the refuse heap.
Lawlessness now governs law.
Mankind no longer is concerned
With not provoking heaven.
-Euripides (*Iphigenia at Aulis*)[50]

The island of Corcyra (Corfu) is the second largest island in the Ionian Sea and lies off the northwestern coast of Greece and Albania. It is separated from the Greek mainland by a narrow channel, and throughout Greek and Roman history, it served as an important base for trade networks, linking the Greek mainland to Italy in the west. It was colonized in approximately 730 BCE by Corinth, a city-state located on the Isthmus of Corinth, a thin piece of land connecting the Peloponnesus to the northern mainland. By the late fifth century BCE, the capital city of Corcyra was a wealthy city-state, and its wealth translated into a formidable fleet.

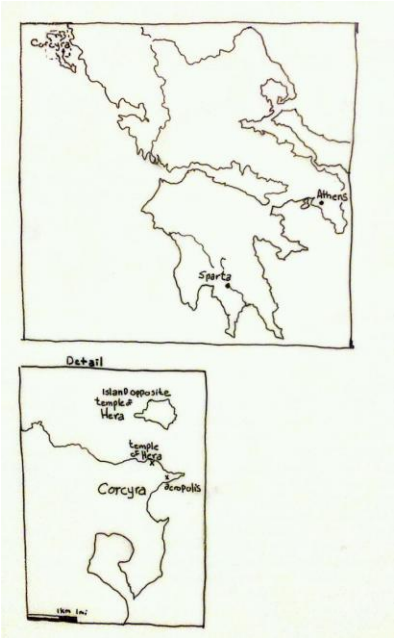

Figure 3.1 Corcyra

[50] *Euripides*: *10 Plays*, translated by Paul Roche, ll. 1074-78.

Struggle for control of this fleet would bring the Corcyreans into the thick of the Peloponnesian War, and the consequences of the conflict demonstrate the fragility of pan-Hellenic unity and values during wartime.

Thucydides mentions Corcyra in a significant way no fewer than three times before the end of Book 3. In his "Archaeology," the history of Hellas leading up to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, he describes the rise of powerful city-states in Hellas and attributes much of their power to the sea:

> But as the power of Hellas grew, and the acquisition of wealth became more an objective, the revenues of the states increasing, tyrannies were established almost everywhere – the old form of government being hereditary monarchy with definitive prerogatives – and Hellas began to fit out fleets and apply herself more closely to the sea.[51]

Navies, which were composed of triremes, became crucial for maintaining and increasing power.[52] The ability to put down piracy and secure trade routes across the Mediterranean allowed the city-states with powerful navies to accumulate vast amounts of revenue, and successful conquest was rare without the aid of navies. According to Thucydides, the Homeric king Agamemnon gained wealth and status through domination of nearby land territories, and yet "he could not have been master of any…if he had not possessed a fleet."[53] Thucydides attributes the earliest naval battle in Greek history to Corinth, the developer of the trireme, when they first clashed with their colony, Corcyra. It is an eerie foreshadowing of conflicts to come and reveals how important naval strength would be in future wars for the Greeks.

Near the end of Book 1, Thucydides conveys how renewed conflict two hundred and sixty years later between Corinth and Corcyra developed into one of the chief proximate causes for

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[51] 1.13.1.
[52] Triremes were light, wooden battle ships about 120 ft in length often with crews of approximately 200 men. Victor Davis Hanson remarked, "There has probably never been as bizarre yet successful a galley as the Greek trireme" (*A War Like No Other*, 236). Hanson has positioned himself to be darling of the neoconservatives, drawing parallels between his interpretation of Greek warfare and the American situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, *A War Like No Other* can and should stand independent of his politics on the strength of its academic merit.
[53] 1.9.4

the Peloponnesian War.[54] For the two Hellenic powers, Sparta and Athens, Corcyra was a faraway island, and quarrels between it and its mother *polis* should not have disturbed their tense balance of power. Donald Kagan explains, "[t]he original crisis, a small cloud in the blue sky, confined to the far northwest, just another in a long series of quarrels between Corcyrean colonists and their Corinthian metropolis, now threatened to reach a more dangerous level, involving at least one of the great powers of the Greek World."[55] The Athenians intervened on behalf of the Corcyreans, whose navy was smaller only than that of the Athenians and the Corinthians. The Corcyreans convinced the Athenians during a speech given in their assembly that "your first endeavor should be to prevent, if possible, the existence of any naval power except your own; failing this, to secure the friendship of the strongest that does exist."[56] Ultimately, the Athenians intervened because they could not allow the Corinthians to increase their navy and thus shift maritime control away from the Athenians. Athenian interference gave the Corinthians a reason to submit a grievance to the Spartans, and they hardly needed another reason, given their long history of enmity for the Athenians. Corinth was one of the more powerful city-states in the Peloponnesian League, and the Spartans were motivated to retain their good will. Thucydides asserts that the expansion of Athenian naval power created a power imbalance that Sparta could not long tolerate and that it was a significant contributor to the outbreak of the war.[57]

However, for Thucydides, Corcyra comes to stand for much more than just one of the earliest colonies to have a navy that rivaled that of its host city, or one of the more immediate causes for the Peloponnesian War. In Book 3, he describes a civil war that broke out on the island of

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[54] 1.13.4.
[55] Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 29.
[56] 1.35.5.
[57] "The Spartans voted that the treaty had been broken, and that war must be declared, not so much because they were persuaded by the arguments of the allies, as because they feared the growth of the power of the Athenians, seeing most of Hellas already subject to them," 1.88.1.

Corcyra in the 420s BCE, a violent affair in which he discerns a complete breakdown of society. The Corcyrean revolt began when the Corinthians released approximately two hundred and fifty Corcyrean prisoners captured in sea battles, granting them safe passage home to Corcyra. Unbeknownst to the Corcyreans, the prisoners had been paid and instructed "to intrigue with the aim of detaching the city from Athens."[58] They urged the Corcyreans to abandon their current alliance with the Athenians and to return to a position of neutrality, in the hopes that the Corcyreans would then become more susceptible to overtures from the Spartans and their allies. A conference was held, with the Corcyreans resolving to "remain allies of the Athenians according to their agreement, but to be friends to the Peloponnesians as they had been formerly."[59] This was welcome news in Athens, where leaders feared the loss of one hundred and twenty triremes friendly to Athens upon the sea.[60]

The Corinthian agents did not give up and next attempted to bring a democratic, pro-Athenian councilman to trial on charges of enslaving the city to Athens. The councilman, Peithias, was acquitted and responded by bringing countercharges of sacrilege against his accusers.[61] The accusers, "rendered desperate by the law…banded together, armed with daggers, and suddenly bursting into the Council, killed Peithias and sixty others."[62] What followed was nothing short of a guerrilla war inside the city waged between the democratic and oligarchic factions, and Hanson succinctly captures the chaos that ensued:

> The poor hoped that their greater numbers and the liberation of hundreds of slaves would prevail over the capital of the oligarchs, who in response forthwith hired 800 foreign mercenaries….The democrats descended from the heights of the city to rout their adversaries, who were terrified in turn by the arrival of an Athenian fleet. Slaves cut down their masters. The women of the city

[58] 3.69.1.
[59] 3.69.2.
[60] Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 25-30.
[61] The Corinthian agents were accused of cutting stakes found on ground sacred to Zeus and Alcinous. As Robert Strassler explains, "It was of course criminal sacrilege to touch land dedicated to a god," *The Landmark Thucyidides*, 3.70.4a.
[62] 3.69.6.

> joined the democrats and pelted the rich with roof tiles. In desperation, the oligarchs tried to torch the city, vainly attempting to ward off the popular uprising even as their hired soldiers deserted in droves.[63]

This civil strife (*stasis*) was only the beginning.[64] A Spartan fleet of fifty triremes arrived in the waters off Corcyra, where they surprised and easily defeated a Corcyrean force assisted by only twelve Athenian triremes. However the Spartans failed to press their advantage, retreating at the threat of a rumored Athenian fleet coming to the aid of the islanders. Sixty ships under the command of Eurymedon did arrive from Athens, bolstering the democratic cause inside the city. Thucydides reports that the pro-Athenian Corcyreans began to slaughter their fellow-citizens, anyone who could be deemed an oligarchic sympathizer, though often those murdered turned out to be victims of personal agendas.[65]

Thucydides tells us that this revolution was unique only in one sense:

> So bloody was the march of revolution, and the impression which it made was the greater as it was one of the first to occur. Later on, one may say, the whole Hellenic world was convulsed; struggles being everywhere made by the popular leaders to bring in the Athenians, and by the oligarchs to introduce the Spartans.[66]

Corcyra was just one of the many theaters in which the evils of civil strife appeared, though it was to be the one that received the most detailed description by Thucydides since it was the first. Hanson estimates that well over one thousand oligarchic sympathizers and their opponents perished at Corcyra alone.[67] Usually, these bloody revolutions affected the overall war little, if at all, and rarely succeeded in creating any lasting changes in cities' affiliations.

The civil strife in Corcyra possessed an ethical interest for Thucydides which transcended its relative unimportance in the overall course of the war. Thucydides was a general during the war until the loss of Amphipolis. The Athenians blamed him for its loss and exiled him. There-

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[63] Hanson, *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War*, 106-7.
[64] *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by Smith, 3.82.1.
[65] Hanson, *A War Like No Other*, 106-8.
[66] 3.82.1.
[67] Hanson, *A War Like No Other*, 108.

fore, one can assume that he was familiar with the horrors of combat: the sights, the sounds, the smell. What appears to have horrified Thucydides was not violence itself, but the manner in which this particular violence manifested itself inside the city.

Hanson supports Thucydides' claim that the Peloponnesian War marked a new trend in Greek warfare and proposes that the ancient Greeks themselves viewed the war differently from previous wars. This is reflected in his unique approach to the narrative of the war; he offers a thematic rather than the usual chronological structure in his book, *A War Like No Other,* all of it told from the perspective of the combatants on the ground. He places the revolt at Corcyra in a chapter on terror, where he argues that the Peloponnesian War was fought in a new and different manner from previous Greek wars. Previous wars supposedly "had been decided honestly by picked contingents who fought at prearranged times and places to avoid larger bloodshed…. In the popular myth, armies were to seek out prearranged flat plains, where each side in similar heavy armor could more easily charge into the other."[68] Greek-speaking societies in the Classical period glorified this heavily-armored soldier, the hoplite, and they viewed as inferior other styles of soldiery, such as cavalry or missile-throwers. However, the Peloponnesian War encouraged the evolution of military tactics away from cumbersome, expensive hoplite battles. Hanson estimates that there were only four true hoplite engagements during the total course of the twenty-seven year war.[69] Every other hostile engagement was a naval battle, a siege, an ambush, a revolt, something unconventional and something that did not reflect the Greek popular preference for a simple, formal clash of arms. Thucydides's narrative reveals that he understood "that the conflict was no conventional fight, but, rather, a new sort of civil war in which there was no divide between war and politics, external policy and internal intrigue, killing on the bat-

[68] Ibid., 133.
[69] Hanson counts "the two large, set-piece hoplite encounters at Delium and Mantinea, and the smaller clashes of phalanxes at Solygia and Syracuse," ibid., 90.

tlefield and murder off it."[70] Corcyra was his illustrative example of this new type of unconventional warfare.

Why? What happened at Corcyra that was so horrible in Thucydides' eyes? It consists of more than a matter of simply unconventional battle tactics. It has more to do with a category previously marked: sacrilege. Thucydides records for posterity the savagery of his fellow Hellenes in the wake of the original revolt: "Death thus raged in every shape; and as usually happens at such times, there was no length to which violence did not go; sons were killed by their fathers, and suppliants dragged from the altars or slain upon it; while some were even walled up in the temple of Dionysus and died there."[71] Speaking more broadly about the revolutionary struggles as a whole, Thucydides tells us:

> Thus every form of iniquity took root in the Hellenic countries by reason of the troubles.….In the confusion into which life was now thrown in the cities, human nature (η ανθρωπίνα φυσις), always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion (οργης), above respect for justice, and the enemy of all superiority; since revenge would not have been above religion (οσιου), and gain above justice, had it not been for the fatal power of envy.[72]

Once more, envy is in the foreground, so that the things meant to provide social stability such as laws, justice, and religion no longer provided a bulwark against the worst elements of human nature.

In her dissertation, *Thucydides and Religion* (later published in 1981), Nanno Marinatos argues that it is in the course of his description of the tragic consequences of the Corcyrean revolt that Thucydides reveals himself to be a moralist, acutely sensitive to the link between the collapse of religion and the collapse of morality. She concludes that it is "quite clear that he associates religion with morality, and that he sees religion as a restraint, a check on man's primal

[70]Ibid., 121.
[71] 3.81.5.
[72] 3.83-3.84.

impulses."[73] The Corcyrean affair represents a transformation of morality in society, with Thucydides clearly regretting the loss of pre-Peloponnesian War principles. The turbulent times caused people to turn against the laws (*nomoi*), by which Thucydides could have and probably meant legal laws adopted by humans in cities, but *nomos* has another meaning besides law; it can mean custom or habit, *unwritten* laws. Marinatos suggests that Thucydides is also referring to these unwritten laws, pan-Hellenic customs commonly observed throughout the Greek-speaking world and repeatedly violated during the war.[74] They form one of the most common tropes in Thucydides's narrative.

One type of violation during the revolt that Thucydides focuses on concerns the pan-Hellenic concept of *asylia* (ασυλια), root for the English word 'asylum.' *Asylia* literally means "prohibition against stealing,"[75] and it operated on two levels. On the one hand, sanctuaries themselves were protected by *asylia*. All were considered to be inviolable precincts (*asylon hieron*): "One of the basic tenets of Greek religion was that everything inside sacred territory was owned by the god – and the possessions of divinities were of course taboo for human beings."[76] Having an inviolable status allowed sanctuaries to function as secure spaces for money storage, safe destination sites for pilgrims, and neutral gathering locations during religious festivals.

On the other hand, *asylia* could be extended from the sacred ground to those who approached the sanctuary as suppliants (male: *hiketes*; female: *hiketis*). If a Greek was in a desperate situation, he could seek the protection guaranteed at sanctuaries by performing a specific ritual. He had to enter the sacred space openly, being honest about his reasons for requiring *asylia*. Next, the person needed to approach either the altar or an image of a deity and sit before it,

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[73] Marinatos, *Thucydides and Religion*, 33.
[74] Marinatos, *Thucydides and Religion*, 31-46.
[75] Ulrich Sinn, "Greek Sanctuaries as Places of Refuge," 90.
[76] Ibid., 90.

holding one of two objects: a strand of wool or a freshly gathered twig. After this rite which the Greeks called *hiketeia*, the person achieved a new status, that of suppliant, and "the sanctuary was in turn obliged to work towards a solution of the problem, as a rule by undertaking the role of a go-between."[77] The priests operated as legal advisors, and the suppliant was permitted to remain on sacred ground until his reason for seeking *asylia* was resolved.

Asylia was a pan-Hellenic custom supposed to be respected by all Greeks, who believed dire consequences followed those who violated it. Euripides, a tragic playwright from Athens and a contemporary of Thucydides, suggests in *The Trojan Women* that Agamemnon and the Greeks returning home from the Trojan War suffered so much because Ajax violated *asylia* in Athena's own temple:

> *Athena:* I want to make the Trojans whom I hated happy,
> and the homecoming of the Achaeans a disaster.
> *Poseidon:* How you shift from mood to mood,
> plunging from hatred to excess of love!
> *Athena:* So you haven't heard how my temples and I have been dishonored?
> *Poseidon*: I have. How Ajax hauled Cassandra from your sanctuary.[78]

Until Ajax raped Cassandra inside the sanctuary itself and removed her against her will from the temple, Athena supported the Greek cause, but after this violation, she visited divine retribution upon them. Denying or killing a suppliant was considered a form of sacrilege, and yet the ancient records abound with instances when this protection was ignored or revoked, and not just in plays. As Marinatos writes, "[o]ne of the most important functions of sanctuaries was to provide shelter to political refugees."[79] There was no formal, written law code applicable to all Greeks, since city-states operated as independent political entities, but there was a widespread understanding of certain unwritten norms. One of them was *asylia*, a necessary feature of the Greek-speaking world due to frequent warfare and political turmoil.

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[77] Ibid., 91.
[78] Euripides, *The Trojan Women.* Trans. Paul Roche (1998) ll. 78-85.
[79] Marinatos, "What were Greek Sanctuaries? A Synthesis," 232.

Thucydides repeatedly describes political refugees seeking *asylia* during the Corcyrean revolt. Before any of the fighting even began, the Corinthian agents indicted Peithias, an influential council member, charging him with enslaving Corcyra to Athens. Once Peithias was acquitted, he brought his own lawsuit against the schemers, "accusing five of the richest of their number of cutting stakes in the ground sacred to Zeus and Alcinous."[80] Claims of sacrilege had become a political tool used for revenge. The violation of *nomoi* became a new weapon, and its deployment caused events in the city to deteriorate rapidly.

After a successful conviction, the agents were responsible for paying a large fine, one they could not afford. They sought refuge in the city's temples: "they seated themselves as suppliants in the temples, to be allowed to pay it by installments."[81] However, Peithias persuaded those in charge of the temples to give up the suppliants. It was the failure of *asylia* to operate that caused the agents to feel as though one of the only options left to them was violence. There was no longer any refuge in religion. Armed with daggers, they attacked the Council, killing at least sixty people. This allowed the conspirators to gain temporary control of the city.

In the initial aftermath of the attack, the losing oligarchic faction had to once again seek *asylia* to protect themselves from vengeful democratic elements. Though the pro-Athenian victors had agreed in a treaty that they would only bring ten of the chief instigators to trial and would allow everything else to return to normal, at the first opportunity, "they began to enroll their enemies for the ships; and these fearing that they might be sent off to Athens seated themselves as suppliants in the temple of the Dioscuri."[82] Citing their unwillingness to sail as proof of their false intentions, the citizens prepared to oust the oligarchs through violence. Only the restraining hand of the Athenian general, Nicostratus, prevented the Corcyreans from molesting

[80] 3.70.4.
[81] 3.70.5.
[82] 3. 75.3.

the suppliants. The oligarchs, however, were transferred to an island off the northern coast of the city-state of Corcyra to prevent them from being able to conspire.

When the pro-Athenian Corcyreans were later defeated in the initial Spartan naval attack, they feared that the Spartan fleet would attempt a rescue of the men basically imprisoned on the island. They returned the oligarchs to the city and placed them inside of Hera's temple. When the Spartans landed and began to lay waste to the countryside, the democratic faction prevailed upon the suppliants to leave and negotiate with the Spartans in an effort to save the city. However, the Spartans quickly retreated at the approach of Eurymedon and his Athenian fleet before the suppliants could act. The departure of the Spartans and the arrival of a strong Athenian presence allowed the democratic faction the freedom to dispense punishment to the Spartan sympathizers. They persuaded fifty of the men seeking sanctuary to attend trial. All of them were convicted and condemned to death. When this news reached the others still in the temple, they "slew each other there in the consecrated ground; while some hanged themselves upon the trees, and others destroyed themselves as they were severally able."[83] This type of mass violence continued for seven days, and Thucydides records that a frequent occurrence was for suppliants to be "dragged from the altar or slain upon it."[84] There was no *asylia* anymore at the end of the Corcyrean affair.

Religion was not the only pan-Hellenic bond to dissolve during the war according to Thucydides. Envy and the desire for power also contributed to profound changes in the language of morality, the other factor supposedly held in common among the warring city-states. He reports,

> Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them. Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal supporter; prudent hesitation, specious

[83] 3.81.3.
[84] 3.81.5.

> cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question incapacity to act on any. Frantic violence became the attribute of manliness; cautious plotting a justifiable means of self-defense….Thus religion (ευσεβεια) was in honor with neither party; but the use of fair phrases to arrive at guilty ends was in high reputation.[85]

This shift in language represented the replacement of traditional values by new ones, and given Thucydides's concern for social stability, it is not surprising that he presents this turn of events as tragic indeed.

The revolt at Corcyra demonstrated the breakdown of social and religious norms. For Thucydides, it was an example of the social disintegration which often followed violent factionalism. Pan-Hellenic *nomoi* like *asylia* ceased to function and were repeatedly transgressed, much like the sacred boundaries meant to protect spaces dedicated to the gods. Even traditional Greek moral vocabulary had metamorphosed into something almost unrecognizable. The violations described by Thucydides were intended as illustrations of the depths to which this war encouraged people to sink. Ultimately, Thucydides concludes that human envy, when combined with the brutality of war, sometimes proves stronger than laws or religion. He clearly expresses disapproval over the collapse of traditional pan-Hellenic values, and he uses the Corcyrean revolt to foreshadow for his reader the tragic later developments during the Peloponnesian War.

[85] 3.82.4, 8.

4 BATTLE AT DELION

But of this be mindful, when ye lay waste the land,
- that ye show reverence towards the gods.
-Sophocles (*Philotectes*)[86]

While the revolt at Corcyra came to symbolize for Thucydides the new, unconventional nature of Greek warfare and its effect on traditional values, the Battle of Delion (Delium) served to illustrate in different ways his perception of an evolving religious and moral landscape during the Peloponnesian War. Delion was a small temple located on the coast in Boeotian territory, just north of a shared frontier with Athens, 2 km from Oropus and 8 km from Tanagra.[87] It earned its name, which means 'little Delos,' from a temple of Apollo that looked out over the sea; it reminded those who saw it of the more famous sanctuary of Apollo located on the island of Delos.[88] In the fall of 424 BCE, the Athenians experienced an infantry disaster near the small border sanctuary of Delion. They were routed in a surprise attack by the Boeotians and forced to fall back, occupy, and defend the temple. Not surprisingly, the Boeotians described Athenian behavior as the most grievous type of sacrilege, and Thucydides seems to agree, using the violation of pan-Hellenic values to cast an unfavorable light on his fellow countrymen.

The Battle of Delion resulted from the Athenian desire to escape a two-front war. By the seventh year of the Peloponnesian war, the Athenians had endured Spartan invasions of the Attic countryside from the south every spring, and their traditional enemy, the rival city of Thebes which dominated politics in Boeotia to the north, consistently attempted to lure democratic allies in Boeotia over to the oligarchic cause, often using tactics similar to those employed at Corcyra. Though Hanson considers the battle of Delion to be one of the few traditional hoplite battles of

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[86] *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, translated by Sir Richard C. Jebb, ll. 1440.
[87] Sources vary as to where the temple of Apollo at Delion was located. For a discussion of possible theories, see Kendrick Pritchett's *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography: Part II (Battlefields)* (1969) 27-30.
[88] *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography: Abacaenum-Hytanis* (1873) edited by Sir William Smith, 758. I thank Dr. Pendrick for an explanation of the etymology of Delion.

the Peloponnesian war, it began with the Athenians planning to defeat their Boeotian foes through subterfuge. To eliminate Theban influence and interference, the Athenians leaders concocted a daring, preemptive plan which they hoped would remove Thebes as a serious threat for the rest of the war, allowing them to focus their attention on the Peloponnesians.

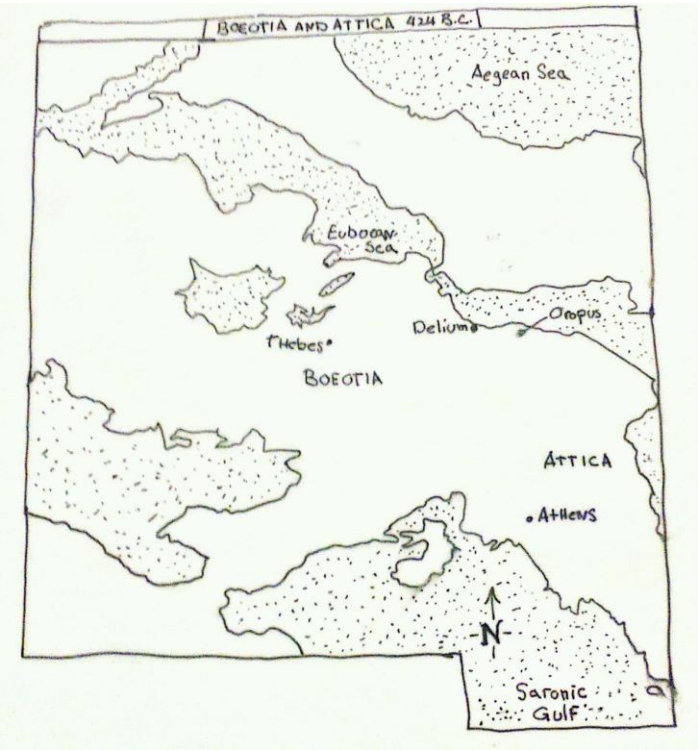

Figure 4.1 Delion

Two Athenian generals (*strategoi*), Demosthenes and Hippocrates, were aware of democrats in at least three city-states in Boeotia who were willing to betray their *poleis* to the Athenians.[89] If they could help these revolutions along, "it was hoped that the capture of these three sites simultaneously might weaken Theban resolve and produce democratic, anti-Theban rebellions all over Boeotia. At the very least, Athens would have three fortresses on the borders of

[89] Neither of these generals should be confused with their more famous homonyms; this Hippocrates was a nephew of Pericles and stepbrother of Alcibiades, not the physician for whom the Hippocratic Oath was named, and this Demosthenes preceded Demosthenes the Orator, the outspoken opponent of Macedonian hegemony.

Boeotia for plundering expeditions and as refuges where exiles could escape."[90] Demosthenes was to take his forces, as many troops as forty triremes could carry, and attack the port cities where pro-democratic forces had indicated their willingness to cooperate. Hippocrates would create a diversion, crossing the Athenian border into Boeotian territory, and build a fortified site, an easily defensible place for retreating hoplites.[91] Then, as Demosthenes marched from the north and Hippocrates came up from the south, they would destroy their rivals in a classic pincer attack.

Unfortunately their plan, which necessitated perfect timing and absolute secrecy, hardly played out as its architects imagined. Thucydides reveals that their plot was foiled almost from the beginning: "[T]he plot had been betrayed by Nicomachus, a Phocian from Phanotis, who informed the Spartans and they the Boeotians."[92] Demosthenes's naval raid lost the element of surprise, and, in addition, the two generals mixed up between them the date for the invasion. When Demosthenes sailed into ports which he expected to be sympathetic to his cause, he found hostile garrisons and no place to land his ships. He retreated, failing to achieve any of his objectives, and those in the cities who had promised support were silent as troops from all over Boeotia arrived to reinforce the endangered cities.

Meanwhile, Hippocrates, as yet unaware that Demosthenes's attack had already been repulsed quite handily, moved his forces across the Athenian border into Delion as a diversionary tactic. He set about preparing the site for fortification. Over the next five days,

> his army began to fortify the sanctuary of Apollo at Delium, in the following manner. A trench was dug all round the temple and the consecrated ground, and the earth thrown up from the excavation was made to do duty as a wall, in which stakes were also planted, the vines round the sanctuary being cut down and thrown in, together with stones and bricks pulled down from the houses nearby, using, in short, every means to build the rampart. Wooden towers were also

[90] Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, 165.
[91] Ibid., 165-6.
[92] 4.89.1.

> erected where they were wanted, and where there was no part of the temple buildings left standing….[93]

When these preparations were completed, Hippocrates learned that his fellow general had already been repulsed. The Boeotians knew Hippocrates was at Delion, so they gathered troops in Tanagra, a Boeotian settlement near Delion, in the hopes of engaging the Athenian army unawares. Believing that it would be a simple retreat, Hippocrates sent the majority of his force, almost 7,000 hoplites, back towards Athens into Oropus. However, he was informed of enemy troop movements in Tanagra, so he left three hundred cavalry to guard the Athenian modifications at Delion.

Though most of the Athenian forces were retreating, a Theban general named Pagondas was eager to attack the unsuspecting invaders. However, Thucydides reports that there was disagreement among the eleven Boeotian generals in Tanagra. Given that the Athenians seemed homeward bound, the other ten generals wanted to allow the Athenians to leave, while the Boeotian army would remain in position to prevent a re-crossing into Boeotia. Pagondas, on the other hand, argued that if they allowed the Athenian forces to retreat, they would just have to deal with them another day. He argued that it made more sense to finish them off now, so they would not be a threat later, and he reminded everyone that they could trust "in the help of the god whose temple has been sacrilegiously fortified."[94] The intimation was that Apollo would side with and support the Boeotians who wanted to oust the temple-violators, and that Apollo would reserve his anger for those who defiled his sacred property.

The speech worked to convince the others, and he led the Boeotian army a short distance away from the resting Athenian hoplites. The topography of the site worked to shield Boeotian troop movements from the Athenians; Pagondas was able to form up his lines for battle without

[93] 4.90.1-2.
[94] 4.92.7.

being seen because of a hill that obstructed vision. Imagine the surprised reactions of the Athenians when 7,000 Boeotian hoplites, 10,000 light troops, 1,000 cavalry, and 500 peltasts appeared on the hilltop already drawn up and ready to fight! Hastily assembling his men, Hippocrates tried to encourage them with a quick speech about the consequences of victory and defeat, but he was unable to complete it as the Boeotians descended the hillside singing their battle paean.

According to Thucydides, the first half of the battle gave the advantage to the Athenians, even though they had been surprised, were outnumbered, and were forced to fight uphill. In fact, the Athenians managed to defeat the Boeotian center decisively. Fearing an imminent, embarrassing loss, Pagondas sent cavalry reserves to harass the flanks of the Athenian lines in order to provide some relief for his beleaguered infantry. Two squadrons appeared on the horizon, and Athenian troops surmised, erroneously, that an entirely new, and fresh, army was attacking them. They dropped their shields and began to flee. Many Athenians were slain as they retreated, the Boeotian cavalry enthusiastically slaughtering all they could catch. Only nightfall prevented the Boeotians from completely massacring the retreating soldiers, allowing many to disappear under the cover of darkness.[95] There were three main escape routes from the battle: one took soldiers through the forests of Oropus and another led them to Mount Parnes. The most commonly used escape route put the fleeing Athenians back at Delion, concealed inside their fortified temple.

In the aftermath of the battle, the Boeotians erected a trophy for their victory and set up a guard over the Athenian corpses left on the battlefield. The Athenians still held Delion, and the next task of the winners was to complete their victory by removing the Athenian presence from the temple of Apollo. The entrenched Athenians sent a herald to ask for a truce so they could collect their slain comrades, as it was customary to allow even enemies to give their dead the ne-

[95] Pritchett, *Studies in Greek Topography: Part II (Battlefields),* 25-33.

cessary rites for burial. However, the Boeotians claimed that it was sacrilege for the Athenians to occupy the temple, so they responded with their own form of sacrilege: denying them the right to collect their dead. Thucydides records the Boeotian grievances as follows:

> [T]hat [the Athenians] had done wrong in transgressing the law of the Hellenes (νομμα). Of what use was the universal custom (νομος) protecting the temples in an invaded country (επι την αλληλων) if the Athenians were to fortify Delium and live there (ενοικειν), acting exactly as if they were on unconsecrated ground (εν βεβηλω), and drawing and using for their purposes the water which they, the Boeotians, never touched except for sacred uses?[96]

They issued an ultimatum: relinquish the temple and get off Boeotian land or forego the burial rites for their fallen. The Athenians resisted the label of sacrilege; they responded that because they had conquered the temple, it was now theirs, and they had a responsibility to defend it. Since the temple was theirs, it should be considered Athenian soil, not Boeotian, and "the condition of evacuating Boeotia must therefore be withdrawn…. All that the Boeotians had to do was to tell them to take up their dead under the truce according to the customs of their forefathers (τα πατρια)."[97] However, the Boeotians did not accept this line of reasoning, and since they held the upper hand militarily, they saw no reason to accommodate the Athenians; they prepared to remove the Athenians by force. They succeeded with relatively new siege technology, "a primitive, but terrifying, flame-thrower."[98] Once their wooden fortifications went up in flames, the Athenians had no choice but to flee. Two hundred were captured, while the rest managed to reach ships waiting on the coast for the return to Athens.

The entire conflict at Delion lasted seventeen days, and its consequences were manifold. Had the strategy of the Athenians worked, had it not been plagued by botched timing and loose tongues, they might have possibly neutralized or damaged one of Sparta's most crucial allies, gaining in the process new allies and resources with which to assault the Peloponnesians. In-

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[96] 4.97.2-3.
[97] 4.98.8.
[98] Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides: Vol II.*, 316.

stead, historians like Victor Davis Hanson refer to the conflict as "an accidental battle in a failed campaign in a backwater theater of the Peloponnesian War."[99] There was no clear shift in power among the classical city-states; no stone monuments or trophies have endured to commemorate the site; and Delion was not in a strategically vital location along a river, road, or city. It was the most devastating defeat the Athenians had suffered yet in the war. They experienced a 14.3% casualty rate (approximately one thousand men) which included their general, Hippocrates.[100] In contrast, only 7.1% of Boeotian soldiers perished. The traumatic memory of hundreds of slain Athenians rotting on the battlefield for seventeen days probably inspired the creation of Euripides' tragedy, *The Suppliants:* "[I]n 422 B.C., Euripides chose to rework the mythical attack by seven heroes on ancient Thebes to present commentary on the recent disaster at Delium, the nature of Athenian society, and the unique differences between Athens and her Peloponnesian War antagonists."[101] The battle of Delion also featured uniquely in the works of Plato, causing the philosopher to ponder the meaning of virtues like courage. Characters present in some of his most famous works, such as the *Symposium* and *Laches*, refer to their experiences at Delion. This includes Socrates (remembered for his bravery during the retreat), Laches (a democratic statesman and Platonic mouthpiece on the virtue of courage), Alcibiades (a famous Athenian aristocrat who fought as a young man at Delion), and Pyrilampes (the stepfather of Plato).

The battle was an embarrassing rout for his fellow Athenians, but one of the reasons Thucydides includes it in his history is to highlight the collapse of traditional values and their relationship to sacred space. Over the duration of the war, the defilement of sanctuaries would be-

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[99] Hanson, "Socrates Dies at Delium, 424 B.C.," 403.
[100] The casualty rates for the Athenians and the Boeotians is considered typical for hoplite battles. Hanson estimates in *The Western Way of War* that winners of a hoplite battle could expect approximately 5% casualty rates, while the losers routinely suffered rates as high as 14%, 209.
[101] Hanson, *Ripples of Battle: How Wars of the Past Still Determine How We Fight, How We Live, and How We Think*, 187.

come commonplace, and events at Delion supported a larger theme in his history that war broke down traditional pan-Hellenic customs (*nomoi*).[102] This particular battle in the Peloponnesian War was important to Thucydides not just because it stifled Athenian hopes of expansion into Boeotian territory, but also because the customs shared in common between the two regions (Boeotia and Attica) were scorned and exploited. One important *nomos* of pan-Hellenic religion which the Athenians were guilty of incurring was *miasma* (μιασμα). *Miasma* is the Greek word for ritual pollution, and translates literally as "stain" or "defilement."[103] Among other things, before entering a sanctuary or other sacred space, ancient Greeks had to fulfill purification requirements. In order to access the divine, conceived of as pure, all ritual impurities had to be eliminated. This was usually achieved by washing in water which derived from a sacred source, such as a spring on temple grounds. Though normally not construed as negative in most circumstances, certain aspects of human life could, in certain sacred contexts, lead to a state of ritual pollution. The activities excluded from the sanctuary are those that define human, and therefore mortal, life: childbirth, death and contact with the dead, menstruation, consumption of particular foods, and sexual intercourse.[104] The sanctuary belonged to the god; "in order to make way for the gods, who are out of the ordinary in the most eminent sense, all that is exceptional in the life of men must remain excluded."[105] When any of these actions occurred in a sanctuary, pollution followed. Pollution was conceived of as contagious, with communal repercussions should divine anger follow.

Andreas Bendlin argues that the categories of "purity" and "pollution" functioned in pan-Hellenic cosmology to create a temporary differentiation between the realms of human and di-

[102] Ibid., 184.
[103] LSJ, s.v.
[104] Andreas Bendlin, "Purity and Pollution", 178-180.
[105] Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 87.

vine. The importance of boundaries was heavily emphasized: "The conceptualization of boundaries – both real and imagined – between the sacred and secular realms – between purity and normality – is a matter of serious attention in Greek religion. Purity is associated with the sacred realm, whereas pollution occurs in the social world beyond its boundaries."[106] In other words, what is sacred and what is not sacred was not intended to be open for interpretation in the Greek-speaking world. Everyone was cognizant of what qualified as sacred and as profane space. Because these were categories applied throughout the Greek-speaking world, it should not be surprising that the Boeotians were horrified by the treatment of the temple of Apollo at the hands of the Athenians and used it as a justification for their own actions, which were equally if not more impious in the eyes of their fellows.

Thucydides never uses the word *miasma* in his history, but in his 1983 book, *Miasma*, Robert Parker, an expert on pan-Hellenic religion, claims that the Greek historian should have. Examples of *miasma* resulting from defiling a sacred space abound in Thucydides, and few are more evident than at the Battle of Delion.[107] Before the battle even commences, Hippocrates deliberately moves his men across the border into Boeotia in order to create a fortified position and support Demosthenes. He chooses the Temple of Apollo in Delion as the site. The soldiers proceed to alter the sacred landscape, property that according to Greek customs should belong to the deity, in this case, specifically Apollo.[108] They chop down trees and vines, dismantle buildings, and otherwise violate the space. They foul the sacred water source (χερνιβι) necessary for purification rituals to ward off *miasma*.[109] Given that the Athenians remained at the temple for over

[106] Bendlin. "Purity and Pollution", 180.
[107] I am thinking of the revolt on Corcyra when *miasma* resulted after the slaughter of suppliants in the temples, and a famous episode of 'purification' on the island of Delos, when the Athenians linked their fortunes to the ritual state of the Delians and attempted to expel the natives on charges of inherited sacrilege, 5.1.1.
[108] Refer to quote on page 27.
[109] 4.97.3.

two weeks, one must assume that they drank and washed liberally with the sacred water, their only water source. Hanson argues that this is a clear transgression of pan-Hellenic laws, which were meant to protect sacred places during times of conflict between city-states.[110] Parker adds that whether or not a sanctuary had a physical boundary made of stones or wood, all sanctuaries possessed something called a 'boundary of respect.' This 'boundary of respect' is the respect due to everything which belonged to or was attributed to the divine. The Athenians did not show consideration for this boundary, and they commited atrocious acts of sacrilege which could cause them to be afflicted with *miasma*: "Where the barrier of respect that hedges round the sacred is violated, pollution occurs."[111]

After the battle, the surviving but defeated Athenians still held and controlled the temple, though the Boeotians controlled the surrounding land. The Boeotians indicated that they wanted the Athenians to abandon their position. The Athenians, however, refused to leave and insisted that the Boeotians allow them to gather their slain comrades, as custom dictated. What followed was a sophistical debate in which "[t]he parties to this dispute address fundamental Thucydidean questions: the relation of justice to piety and of both to force or compulsion."[112] An Athenian herald was sent initially to request that the Boeotians respect the custom of being allowed to collect and bury the dead on the battlefield, but the Boeotians refused on the grounds of Athenian impiety: "They had done wrong in transgressing the law of the Hellenes (*nomima*)."[113] The Boeotians were claiming that the Athenians acted "not justly" (ου δικαίως), a phrase in Greek with a frequent connotation of violence.[114] The word *nomima*, which Crawley translates as 'law

[110] Hanson, *Ripples of Battle*, 177.
[111] Parker, *Miasma*, 149-50.
[112] Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 91.
[113] For exact charges leveled against the Athenians, see quote on page 29, 4.97.2.
[114] I thank Dr. Pendrick for this insight, 4.97.3.

of the Hellenes,' refers in this context explicitly to religious laws or customs. Therefore, the Athenians violently breached the religious rules of the Greek-speaking world.

It is significant that the Boeotians stressed the violation of *Greek* laws, not foreign or barbarian ones. Even though the temple of Apollo at Delion was not a *pan-Hellenic* temple, it was still governed by pan-Hellenic laws. For ancient Greeks, customs and laws existed to establish and maintain civilized life, and their *nomoi* set the Greeks apart from other cultures. Societies who did things differently could be considered uncivilized barbarians. There was an expected element of reciprocity present in the treatment of Hellenic temples. When two Greek city-states fought and invaded one another, the temples were supposed to be left alone. Consecrated ground was marked and should be treated differently than normal, profane space. When the Boeotians list their complaints, they mention that the Athenians act like the temple is "εν βεβηλω," which translates literally as "where you can go/tread." The Athenians were treating Apollo's sanctuary like ordinary space, presumably doing things there (though Thucydides does not mention them specifically) which should be separated from the divine realm, like eating, drinking, and making waste, all of which incur ritual pollution in a sanctuary.

In response to the accusations of the Boeotians, the Athenians sent a herald to answer these charges. The herald asserted that "they had not done anything wrong to the temple, and for the future would do it no more harm than they could help; not having occupied it originally for this purpose, but to defend themselves from it against those who were really wronging them."[115] The Athenians were trying to emphasize that their actions were of a defensive nature, that previous events between Boeotia and Athens had necessitated the steps Demosthenes and Hippocrates had attempted to enact. This, according to Hellenic standards of conduct, implied that the Athenians were acting justly in seizing and fortifying the sanctuary. Clifford Orwin, a classical

[115] 4.98.1.

scholar, argues that the dialogue presented by the Athenians blurs and even breaks down distinctions between just and unjust actions perpetrated during conquest, echoing the shift in moral vocabulary at Corcyra. The Athenians contended that because they were now in possession of the temple, it was theirs by right of conquest, and the Boeotians were being unreasonable in their demand for the invaders to forsake the temple: "If the Athenians could have conquered more of Boeotia this would have been the case with them: as things stood, the piece of it which they got they should treat as their own, and not quit unless obliged."[116] Therefore, according to the Athenians' argument, force conveys right, and "right thus utterly collapses as a limit on conquest."[117] The gods should respect the right of conquest; temples come with seized territories, and it is not their concern which side possesses them.

But surely possessing a temple is one matter while desecrating it is another. To deny charges of impiety, the Athenians alleged that the gods forgive what is committed out of necessity. Their sacrilege was involuntary, meaning they committed it under duress, war surely counting as a time of duress. They "insist then that the gods might and should accept the defense of involuntariness in cases of impiety as in those of injustice."[118] They also argued that their impiety was slight when compared with recent Boeotian actions: "In short which were the most impious – the Boeotians who wished to barter dead bodies for holy places, or the Athenians who refused to give up holy places to obtain what was theirs by right?"[119] The Athenians had acted as they had "by the right of the sword," but the Boeotians went against the sacred ancestral ways (τα πατρια).[120]

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[116] 4.98.4.
[117] Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 93.
[118] Ibid., 94.
[119] 4.98.7.
[120] 4.98.8.

Orwin points out that the Boeotian refusal was prompted by Athenian behavior, and the requisite wrangling over fine points of sacred law were attempts to discern whether or not they had broken laws which forbid dishonoring deities. He argues that Thucydides is more sympathetic towards the Boeotians, as the Athenians tended to use clever, sophistical arguments to justify their behavior. Necessity, by their own claims, could and should excuse injustice and impiety. Therefore, "even respect for the sacred must yield to the necessities of human life."[121] However, their argument that they yielded to necessity could work both ways. If the Athenians claimed that necessity drove them to violate the sanctuary, then the Boeotians could theoretically also assert that necessity justified their refusal of the Athenians' right to collect their dead, and there was no impiety, since the gods would forgive their actions.

Looking at the overarching events of the battle of Delion, and taking into account the speeches presented by both sides, Clifford Orwin believes that Thucydides presents the Athenians as clever sophists who twist sacred law to suit their own convenience. Many scholars view the inclusion of this debate as Thucydides's way of pointing out the sacrilege of not burying the dead. The fact that Athenian corpses were left to rot on the battlefield for seventeen hot, humid, late-summer days scarred the memory of the citizens of Athens and no doubt did violate common Greek expectations for the proper treatment of corpses. However, Orwin disagrees with the notion that ultimately Thucydides paints the Boeotians in a worse light than the Athenians, as has been commonly supposed. He points out that the Delion debate represents "one of only three (with the speech of the envoys at Sparta and the Melian dialogue) in which Thucydides identifies the speakers for Athens simply as 'the Athenians.' These features identify this passage as a major exposition of the 'Athenian thesis' and (given its location in the work) perhaps a bridge be-

[121] Ibid., 95.

tween the two more celebrated ones."[122] The Athenian thesis is a theory that Thucydides deliberately depicted Athens as an empire which operated according to the assumption that might makes right and justice only exists between equals. Thus, they believed that their constant expansion was justified because of their strength, but the picture Thucydides presented in his history is one of an empire constantly overreaching itself.

Just as Corcyra was Thucydides's didactic example of the new realities of wartime and of the shift in moral attitude those realities created, and thus received the most detailed description among the many revolutions occurring throughout the Greek-speaking world, so the sanctuary of Apollo at Delion featured in the most detailed portrayal of any sanctuary in his history.[123] Previously, we saw that Thucydides may have viewed traditional pan-Hellenic values and customs as a restraint on human behavior. At Corcyra, these restraints evaporated and the result was lawless violence and the rejection of a common function of sanctuaries, *asylia*. Thucydides' depiction of the events at Delion again reveals his conviction that pan-Hellenic values provided a check on humanity's baser impulses.[124] The Athenian assertion that piety is only expected when necessity allows for it collapses the traditional distinction between sacred and profane space, and it should not be surprising that Thucydides disapproves of Athenian attitudes toward the sanctuary at Delion even as he uses them to support his argument that the Peloponnesian War gave rise to darker times in which not even the threat of being tainted with *miasma* was enough to prevent the violation of sacred places.

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[122] Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 91.
[123] Crane, *The Blinded Eye: Thucydides and the New Written Word*, 194-7.
[124] Orwin, *The Humanity of Thucydides*, 94-6.

5 CONCLUSION

It is my hope that this thesis provides new insight into *The Peloponnesian War* and the man who wrote it. I believe, based on the evidence assembled here, that it is possible to claim that Thucydides did possess an interest in pan-Hellenic religious space and its norms, if only for their use as symbols of the breakdown of social stability during periods of intense violence. It should be clear that I do not wish to make any assertions about Thucydides's personal religious beliefs. Not only is such a question beyond the purview of this thesis, it is also ultimately unanswerable, and therefore not a valuable line of inquiry to pursue. What can be said with confidence is that Thucydides took special note of those moments during the war in which sacred spaces were violated, and he presented these sacrilegious scenes to his audience as proof of the cataclysmic nature of the war. When sacrilege became a weapon of politics or convenience, society seemed to degenerate. The subtle manner in which such scenes were embedded into the continuous narrative of the war will have spoken powerfully to an audience who were aware that certain lines were not meant to be crossed - and had been.

Were this thesis longer, there are other moments in Thucydides's history I could have included which would further demonstrate his preoccupation with the relationship between the observance of religious norms and social stability. Right before the Athenians launched their massive expedition to Sicily (arguably their single most tragic mistake during the entire war), unknown elements caused an uproar by violating all of the Herm statues throughout the city.[125] Another telling moment centers on the pan-Hellenic Olympic contests of 420 BCE. The Spartans were accused of violating the sacred truce which was in effect before and after all such pan-

[125] A Herm functioned as the boundary marker for private property, and their violation was interpreted as a dreadful omen, one which cast doubt on the soundness of the expedition. This event became a weapon Alcibiades's political enemies used to remove him from command of the expedition when blame for the sacrilege fell at his feet and he was on the way to Siciliy, unable to defend himself against his accusers.

Hellenic festivals. They sent hoplites into Lepreum, a city-state located to the south of Olympia. Elis, the city-state that sponsored the Olympic contests, denied the Spartans the privilege of attending the event unless they paid a fine.[126] It would be interesting to compare Thucydides's depiction of Spartan restraint with the Athenians' earlier behavior at Delion. Both of these scenes, and many others besides, give us the opportunity to investigate and expand our knowledge about the role of the trope of sacrilege within Thucydides's narrative, and given the opportunity to continue working on this project, I plan to do exactly that.

[126] The Spartans refused to admit they had committed any violations of the truce, and they did not pay the fine. The Greek-speaking world held its breath as they expected violence to erupt when Sparta was denied the ability to compete in the Olympics; the Spartans were notorious for their adherence to piety, and no one expected them to accept their exclusion meekly. However, they merely declined to attend the festival and held their own sacrifices on home ground.

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7 APPENDIX

Full text of the treaty between Athens and Sparta ratified in 421 BCE, commonly referred to as the Peace of Nicias, as it appears in Strassler's *The Landmark Thucydides* (5.18-5.19):

The Athenians and Spartans and their allies made a treaty, and swear to it, city by city, as follows:

- *Regarding the national temples, there shall be a free passage by land and by sea to all who wish it, to sacrifice, travel, consult, and attend the oracle or games, according to the customs of their countries.*
- *The temple and shrine of Apollo at Delphi and the Delphians shall be governed by their own laws, taxed by their own state, and judged by their own judges, the land and the people, according to the customs of their country.*
- *The treaty shall be binding for fifty years upon the Athenians and the allies of the Athenians, and upon the Spartans and the allies of the Spartans, without fraud or harm by land or by sea.*
- *It shall not be lawful to take up arms, with intent to do injury either for the Spartans and their allies against the Athenians and their allies, or for the Athenians and their allies against the Spartans and their allies, in any way or means whatsoever. But should any difference arise between them they are to have recourse to law and oaths, according as may be agreed between the parties.*
- *The Spartans and their allies shall give back Amphipolis to the Athenians. Nevertheless, in the case of cities given up by the Spartans to the Athenians, the inhabitants shall be allowed to go where they please and to take their property with them; and the cities shall be independent,*

paying only the tribute to Aristides. And it shall not be lawful for the Athenians or their allies to carry on war against them after the treaty has been concluded, so long as the tribute is paid. The cities referred to are Argilus, Stagirus, Acanthus, Scolus, Olynthus, and Spartolus. These cities shall be neutral, allies neither of the Spartans nor of the Athenians; but if the cities consent, it shall be lawful for the Athenians to make them their allies, provided always that the cities wish it. The Mecybernaeans, Sanaeans, and Singaeans shall inhabit their own cities, as also the Olynthians and Acanthians; but the Spartans and their allies shall give back Panactum to the Athenians.

- *The Athenians shall give back Corphasium, Cythera, Methana, Pteleum, and Atalanta to the Spartans, and also all the Spartans that are in the prison at Athens or elsewhere in the Athenian dominions, and shall let go the Peloponnesians besieged in Scione and all others in Scione that are allies of the Spartans, and all whom Brasidas sent in there, and any others of the allies of the Spartans that may be in the prison at Athens or elsewhere in the Athenian dominions.*
- *The Spartans and their allies shall in like manner give back any of the Athenians or their allies that they may have in their hands.*
- *In the case of Scione, Torone, and Sermylium and any other cities that the Athenians may have, the Athenians may adopt such measures as they please.*
- *The Athenians shall take an oath to the Spartans and their allies, city by city. Every man shall swear by the most binding oath of his country, seventeen from each city. The oath shall be as follows: - "I will abide by this agreement and treaty honestly and without deceit." In the same way an oath shall be taken by the Spartans and their allies to the Athenians;*
- *and the oath shall be renewed annually by both parties. Pillars shall be erected at Olympia, Pythia, the Isthmus, at Athens in the Acropolis, and at Sparta in the temple at Amyclae.*

- *If anything be forgotten, whatever it be, and on whatever point, it shall be consistent with their oath for both parties the Athenians and the Spartans to alter it, according to their discretion.*

The treaty begins from the ephorate of Pleistolas in Sparta, on the 27th day of the month of Artemisium, and from the archonship of Alcaeus at Athens, on the 25th day of the month of Elaphebolion. Those who took the oath and poured the libation for the Spartans were Pleistoanax, Agis, Pleistolas, Damagetus, Chionis, Metagenes, Acanthus, Daithus, Ischagoras, Philocharidas, Zeuxidas, Antippus, Tellis, Alcinadas, Empedias, Menas, and Laphilus; for the Athenians, Lampon, Isthmionicus, Nicias, Laches, Euthymedes, Procles, Pythodorus, Hagnon, Myrtilus, Thrasycles, Theagenes, Aristocrates, Iolcius, Timocrates, Leon, Lamachus, and Demosthenes.