

## Siege of Potidaea

Potidaea was a small polis on the Chalkidic peninsula (Flensted-Jensen 2004:838). It was established as a colony of Corinth (Thuc.1.56) and was a ship-contributing member of the Delian league before switching to monetary tributes (Flensted-Jensen 2004:838).

The siege of Potidaea lasted for two years (Thuc.2.70.5). It started when, suspecting enmity of the Corinthians, the Athenians order the Potidaeans to pull down their walls and give hostages, to ensure they would not side against the Athenians (Thuc.1.56). At the same time, Perdiccas, king of the Macadonians, became an enemy of Athens and attempted to incite a war between the Athenians and Peloponnesians and encouraged several poleis bordering his land to revolt against the Athenians (Thuc.1.57). The Potidaeans sent envoys to Athens and the Lacedaemonians and, after securing no agreements with Athens but receiving a promise from the Lacedaemonians that they would go to war if Athens attacked Potidaea, Potidaea revolted against Athens (Thuc.1.58.1-2). Both Corinth and Athens sent reinforcement to their forces already in the area (Thuc.1.60-61). The Potidaeans and their allies, the Peloponnesians and Perdiccas, made a two-pronged battle plan to divide the Athenian forces (Thuc.1.62). This plan failed and the Potidaeans and their allies retreated behind the city walls (Thuc.1.62). Athens sent more ships to blockade the holes in Potidaea's defences, officially putting the city under siege (Thuc.1.64).

Later Thucydides mentions an attempt to break through the city walls by Athens however this was a failure despite the considerable preparations made (Thuc.2.58). The city eventually surrendered due to hunger (Thuc.2.70).

The events building up to the siege of Potidaea are documented in greater detail than the event itself, which is only vaguely described (Thuc.1.56-64). In comparison the events preceding the 'Potidaea episode', called the 'Corcyra episode', are covered in twenty more chapters than the ten chapters concerning Potidaea (Hornblower 1997:96-7).

The significance of this event is seen Thucydides later mentions it when referring to what he feels were the causes of the Great Peloponnesian war (Thuc.1.118.1).

## Bibliography

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