



Economy, Society and War

Ordinary effects

The destruction of the countryside

- ▶ The Athenians listened to his advice, and began to carry in their wives and children from the country, and all their household furniture, even to the woodwork of their houses which they took down. Their sheep and cattle they sent over to Euboea and the adjacent islands. [2] But they found it hard to move, as most of them had been always used to live in the country. ... XVI. The Athenians thus long lived scattered over Attica in independent townships. Even after the centralization of Theseus, old habit still prevailed; and from the early times down to the present war most Athenians still lived in the country with their families and households, **and were consequently not at all inclined to move now, especially as they had only just restored their establishments after the Median invasion.** [2] Deep was their trouble and discontent at abandoning their houses and the hereditary temples of the ancient constitution, and at having to change their habits of life and to bid farewell to what each regarded as his native city. Thucydides 2.14&2.16

Agriculture and economy

- ▶ The same summer, without loss of time, Brasidas marched with the Chalcidians against Acanthus, a colony of the Andrians, a little before vintage. [2] The inhabitants were divided into two parties on the question of receiving him; those who had joined the Chalcidians in inviting him, and the popular party. However, fear for their fruit, which was still out, enabled Brasidas to persuade the multitude to admit him alone, and to hear what he had to say before making a decision; Thuc. 4.84

Orphans in Athens

- ▶ He also supervises orphans and heiresses and women professing to be with child after the husband's death, and he has absolute power to fine offenders against them or to bring them before the Jury-court. He grants leases of houses belonging to orphans and heiresses until they are fourteen years of age, and receives the rents, and he exacts maintenance for children from guardians who fail to supply it. [Arist.]

AthPol 56

Orphans of war

- ▶ He proposed a law that those who discovered something of advantage to the state should receive honor, and that the children of those who died in war should have their maintenance from the state, in the belief that this had never yet been provided by law among other people—but as a matter of fact this law exists at present both at Athens and in others of the cities. Arist. Pol. 1268a

Loss and Disaster in Battle

The Sicilian Expedition

- ▶ From 416 BCE, the Athenians started the debate and preparation for the Great Sicilian Expedition.
- ▶ The expedition was aimed at the conquest of Sicily and Magna Graecia.
- ▶ Thucydides presents the decision to open another front in the war and try to take up as big a city as Syracuse as an act of collective madness on the part of the Athenians.

A disaster like no other

- ▶ The prisoners in the quarries were at first hardly treated by the Syracusans. Crowded in a narrow hole, without any roof to cover them, the heat of the sun and the stifling closeness of the air tormented them during the day, and then the nights which came on autumnal and chilly, made them ill by the violence of the change; [2] besides, as they had to do everything in the same place for want of room, and the bodies of those who died of their wounds or from the variation in the temperature, or from similar causes, were left heaped together one upon another, intolerable stench arose; **while hunger and thirst never ceased to afflict them, each man during eight months having only half a pint of water and a pint of corn given him daily.** In short, no single suffering to be apprehended by men thrust into such a place was spared them. [3] For some seventy days they thus lived all together, after which all, except the Athenians and any Siceliots or Italiots who had joined in the expedition, **were sold.** [4] The total number of prisoners taken it would be difficult to state exactly, but it **could not have been less than seven thousand.** [5] This was the greatest Hellenic achievement of any in this war, or, in my opinion, in Hellenic history; at once most glorious to the victors, and most calamitous to the conquered. [6] They were beaten at all points and altogether; all that they suffered was great; they were destroyed, as the saying is, **with a total destruction, their fleet, their army--everything was destroyed, and few out of many returned home.** Such were the events in Sicily. Thucydides 7.87

Fear in Athens

- ▶ Such were the events in Sicily. When the news was brought to Athens, for a long while they disbelieved even the most respectable of the soldiers who had themselves escaped from the scene of action and clearly reported the matter, a destruction so complete not being thought credible. When the conviction was forced upon them, they were angry with the orators who had joined in promoting the expedition, just as if they had not themselves voted it, and were enraged also with the reciters of oracles and soothsayers, and all other omenmongers of the time who had encouraged them to hope that they should conquer Sicily.

[2] Already distressed at all points and in all quarters, after what had now happened, they were seized by a fear and consternation quite without example. **It was grievous enough for the state and for every man in his proper person to lose so many heavy infantry, cavalry, and able-bodied troops, and to see none left to replace them; but when they saw, also, that they had not sufficient ships in their docks, or money in the treasury, or crews for the ships, they began to despair of salvation.** They thought that their enemies in Sicily would immediately sail with their fleet against Piraeus, inflamed by so signal a victory; while their adversaries at home, redoubling all their preparations, would vigorously attack them by sea and land at once, aided by their own revolted confederates. Thucydides 8.1



Andrapodismos and Destruction of enemies

The Melian Destruction

- ▶ Reinforcements afterwards arriving from [Athens](#) in consequence, under the command of Philocrates, son of Demeas, the siege was now pressed vigorously; and some treachery taking place inside, the Melians surrendered at discretion to the Athenians, [4] who put to death all the grown men whom they took, and sold the women and children for slaves, and subsequently sent out five hundred colonists and inhabited the place themselves. Thuc. 5.116

Retaliation

- It was at night that the *Paralus* arrived at Athens with tidings of the disaster, and a sound of wailing ran from Piraeus through the long walls to the city, one man passing on the news to another; and during that night no one slept, all mourning, not for the lost alone, but far more for their own selves, **thinking that they would suffer such treatment as they had visited upon the Melians, colonists of the Spartans, after reducing them by siege, and upon the Histiaeans and Scionaeans and Toronaeans and Aeginetans and many other Greek peoples.**Xen. Hell. 2.2.3