

ATHENS AND ROME: LIFE AND CULTURE IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

Lecture 15 – Imperialism

CLCS4007

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- ▣ *Imperito* – to command, to give an order.
- ▣ *Imperium* – power to command, and hence a geographic area in which such command is recognised.
- ▣ Imperialism – ‘a policy of extending a country’s power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means’ – Oxford Dictionary;
 - the modern English term has its root in the Latin, but there was no specific Latin equivalent that conveys the meaning of our word imperialism.

Athenian Imperialism

Sources for Athens

▣ Direct evidence

- Literary sources, particularly Thucydides.
- Epigraphic evidence: the contents of the inscriptions (alliances, tribute lists etc), but also the language used.

▣ Indirect evidence

- coinage, its distribution and use.
- archaeological evidence.

Development of the Delian League

- ▣ Athens rebuilds after the devastation of Xerxes invasion, including the city walls and that of the Piraeus, reportedly causing Sparta unease – **Thucydides 1.89-92.**
- ▣ The Greeks continue to attack areas under Persian control – initially led by Spartans, but Pausanias became unpopular; Athenians take the lead – the Athenians then assess the contributions that each participating state should make in war against Persia - **Thucydides 1.94-95.**
- ▣ Aim of the league to ravish Persian land for reparations, and to “free” Ionian cities – **Thucydides 1.96, 3.10.4.**
- ▣ Contributions of money, ships, or resources (Amphipolis provided Athens with timber for ships and money).

“At this time the officials known as ‘Hellenic Treasurers’ were first appointed by the Athenians. These officials received the tribute, which was the name given to the contributions in money. The original fixed sum was 460 talents. **The treasury of the League was at Delos**, and representative meetings were held in the temple there.” - Thucydides 1.96.



Pros and Cons for Member States

ADVANTAGES

- ❑ Difficult for smaller states to maintain an effective navy – paying money means don't have to risk life in campaigns.
- ❑ Can call on Athenians for help.
- ❑ Allied/Athenian navy helps reduce piracy.
- ❑ The Tribute List for 441 BC shows that most contributors paid one talent or less (71% of the 205 contributors in that year). Thus 86% of that year's revenue was contributed by 29% of the contributors.

DISADVANTAGES

- ❑ Potential encroachment on territory.
- ❑ No right to secede.
- ❑ If not providing troops or ships leaves state venerable.
- ❑ Harsh penalties for disloyalty / disobedience.
- ❑ Some legal affairs had to be dealt with in Athens.
- ❑ Affront to dignity (especially for more powerful cities).
- ❑ Heavier contributions for larger states and rebellious members.

Remaining in the League

“Subsequently, the Naxians seceded, and the Athenians fought them and brought them to heel with a blockade. This was the first allied city that was reduced to slavery in contravention of the league’s constitution, but later it also happened to the others, under various circumstances.” – **Thucydides 1.98.4.**

“It was the allies who brought this on themselves. Because of their aversion to military service... had their contributions assessed in cash...” – **Thucydides 1.99.3.**

“[the people are to swear] the following: I will not revolt [from the Athenian people nor from the allies] of the Athenians, neither myself [not will I persuade another, and I] will obey the Athenian’s [decision. This oath and the oath of the council are to be written up] on a stone stele [on the Acropolis]...” – **IG I³ 14, 15 – The Erythraean Decree 453/2 BC.**

Difficulty of Rebellion

“However, with the subjects of a naval power it is different. Since as they are groups of islanders it is impossible for their states to meet together for united action, for the sea lies between them, and the dominant power is master of the sea. And even if it were possible for them to assemble in some single island unobserved, they would only perish of famine as a result.” – **The Old Oligarch 2.2.**

Consequences of Rebellion

- ▣ The Samian Revolt (441/0 to 440/39 BC).

“After eight months the Samians capitulated, and Pericles demolished their walls, confiscated their fleet, and fined them heavily. The Samians paid the fine immediately, and gave hostages...” – **Plutarch**
Pericles 28.1.

- ▣ The “Mytilenean Debate” (427 BC) – speeches of Cleon and Diodotus. Initial decision was to kill all men, and enslave women and children – latter proposal of Diodotus which wins was to kill only the 1,000 leading citizens. Athenian Klêroukhoi sent to Lesbos to settle oligarchs land – **Thucydides** 3.36-50.

Tribute to Athens

- ▣ Lists of one-sixtieth of the tribute from the allies that was dedicated to Athena.
- ▣ Lists date from 454-409 BC.
- ▣ Full lists of tribute do not survive.



“But that which brought most delightful beautification to Athens... I mean his construction of sacred edifices, — this, more than all the public measures of Pericles, his enemies maligned and slandered. They cried out in the assemblies: ‘The people has lost its just fame and is in ill repute because it has removed the public moneys of the Greeks from Delos into its own keeping... And surely Greece is upset with a dire insult and manifestly subjected to tyranny when she sees that, with her own enforced contributions for the war, we are embellishing and adorning our city...” - **Plutarch** *Pericles* 12.1-2.

Increasing Contributions

“...so did the allies of Athens sing the praises of Aristides ‘ tribute assessment, calling it a piece of good fortune for Greece, especially since shortly after the tribute doubled, and then tripled after that. For Aristides’ tribute rate was 460 talents. To this Pericles added almost a third as much again, for Thucydides [2.13.2] says [the Athens received 600 talents from the allies]... After Pericles died, the demagogues raised it in increments until they brought it up to 1,300 talents.” – **Plutarch *Aristides* 24.2-3.**

“Peace of Callias”

- ▣ Purported peace treaty in 449 BC between Athens (and her allies) and the Persian Empire.
- ▣ Not mentioned in fifth century BC sources.
- ▣ Either way decrease on attacks on Persian interests (the *raison d'être* of the league).

“Thus a peace treaty with the Persians was concluded by the Athenians and their allies, the main points of which were the following: All Greek cities in Asia are to be autonomous... the Athenians will not send their forces into lands ruled by the king.” – **Diodorus Siculus** *Bibliotheca Historica* 12.4.5.

Language of Empire

“Your Empire is now like a tyranny: it may have been wrong to take it; it is certainly dangerous to let it go.” - **Thucydides 2.63. – Speech of Pericles 430 BC.**

- ▣ A shift in the terminology used in Athenian inscription from the mid-late fifth century BC is apparent.

πόλεις ὅσων Ἀθηναῖοι κρατοῦσιν

“The Cities which the Athenians Rule”

- ▣ Most Athenian inscriptions date after 460's BC.

The Coinage Decree

- ❑ Fragmentary inscription, found in eight surviving parts.
- ❑ No precise date survive for the inscription, but it is variously dated to around the 440s to 410s BC.

“An addition shall be made to the oath of the Boule by the Secretary of the [Boule, in future, as] follows: ‘If someone coins money of silver in the cities and does not use [Athen]ian coins or weights or measures [but (uses instead) foreign coins] and measures and weights, [I shall exact punishment and penalize him according to the former decree which Klearch]os moved’.” – (Fornara - 97).



Legal Cases

- ▣ It is not clear cases exactly were brought to Athens. It seems mainly to concern loss of citizen rights, exile, and potential death sentences.
- ▣ It meant that the allies depended on the demos rather than on its own generals and other officials

“...it is seen as a mistake on the part of the Athenian democracy to force her allies to voyage to Athens in order to have a case tried. On the contrary... firstly they draw pay throughout the year from court fees. Secondly they control the affairs of the allied states while seated at home without the expense of a naval expedition. Thirdly, they thus preserve the partisans of the democracy and ruin her opponents in the law courts.” – **The Old Oligarch 1.16.**

The Sicilian Expedition

- ▣ Ostensible motive of Sicilian expedition – to help ally Egesta.
- ▣ Also a desire for wealth and more resources.

“In fact they [Athenians] aimed at conquering the whole of it [Sicily], though they wanted at the same time to make it look like they were sending help to their own kinsmen and to their newly acquired allies there.” - **Thucydides 6.6.**

Downfall of Athens' Empire

“In particular the subjects of Athens were all ready to revolt; indeed they were more ready than able, since they were incapable of taking a dispassionate view of things, and would not admit the possibility of Athens surviving the coming summer.” – **Thucydides 8.2.** [aftermath of Sicilian expedition – 412/11 BC].

“Indeed, the rest of the Greek world also had fallen away from the Athenians immediately after the battle [Aegospotami], with the exception of Samos; there the people slaughtered the aristocrats and held possession of their city.” – **Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.2.6.**

“After this Lysander sailed into Piraeus, the exiles returned, and the Peloponnesians with great enthusiasm began to tear down the walls to the music of flute-girls, thinking that that day was the beginning of freedom for Greece.” (2.2.23).

Second Athenian Confederacy

- In 379/8 BC many states in across the Greek world started forming alliances due to Spartan arrogance an interventionism. - **Diodorus Siculus 15.28.2-4.**
- **Athenian alliance with Chalcis – IG II² 44.**

“...There shall be [allianc]e between the [Ath]enians and the Chalcidians. Alliance between the Chal[cidi]ans in Eu[b]oea and the [Atheni]ans. The Chalcidi[ans] shall own their own [land] in freedom [and] autonomy and... will neither have a garrison placed on them [by the Athenians], nor will they pay tribute, nor accept [a governor] contrary to the decree [of the allies.]...” – **Lines 18-26.**

Roman Imperialism

Theories of Roman Expansion

- Earlier theories of the Romans being defensive and reluctant to annex territory (e.g. reluctance to annex Macedonia, refusal of lands bequeathed to her);
 - *bellum iustum* (just war).
- It has also been suggested that economic motives not taken into account.
- Ambitions of Republican magistrates to win glory and acquire wealth.

Imperialism in the Republic

- ▣ Not necessarily based on formal annexation or conversion of an area into a province, but also on influence:
 - T. Flaminus, freedom of the Greeks (196 BC);
 - Antiochus IV expelled from Egypt by Popilius (168 BC).
- ▣ Increasing acquisition of territory:
 - parts of Spain as result of second Punic War;
 - Attalus III of Pergamun bequeaths his kingdom to Rome (133 BC).

Caesar in Gaul

- ▣ Original intention may have been to campaign in Balkans against Dacians.
- ▣ Attempted migration of Helvetii gave Caesar a pretext for intervening in Gaul.

“When it was reported to Caesar that they were attempting to make their route through our Province he hastens to set out from the city, and, by as great marches as he can, proceeds to Further Gaul, and arrives at Geneva.” – **Caesar *Gallic War* 1.7.**

Expansion in Imperial Times

Military Glory and the Emperor

- Once Augustus achieves sole pre-eminence, all subsequent military campaigns are directed under his orders.
- The last person to receive a full triumph who was not a member of the Imperial family is Lucius Cornelius Balbus (19 BC).
- Emperors campaigning in person or through their legates, varies from emperor to emperor.

Dominance of the Oikoumene

“No longer does the Euphrates allow Parthian cavalry to glance behind their backs, and regrets retaining possession of Crassus’ men: even India presents its neck to your triumph. Augustus, and the house of virgin Arabia trembles before you; and hereafter if any land retreats to the world’s end, let it be captured and feel your wrath.” – **Propertius *Elegies* 2.10.13-18.**

“Divine Caesar is contemplating war on the Indians, planning to cleave the waters of the gem-laden Indian ocean with his fleet.” – (3.4.1-2).

“Four books were then brought in and Drusus read them... the fourth had injunctions and commands for Tiberius and for the public. Among these injunctions... **He advised them to be satisfied with their present possessions and under no conditions to wish to increase the empire to any greater dimensions.** It would be hard to guard, he said, and this would lead to danger of their losing what was already theirs.” – **Dio Cassius 56.33.**

“Augustus had written this all out in his own hand. Furthermore, he had added a clause advising that the empire should not be extended beyond its present frontiers. Either he feared danger ahead or he was jealous.” – **Tacitus *Annals* 1.11.**

Motives for Expansion

- ▣ To establish credibility or gain personal glory; cf. Claudius' invasion of Britain.

“Claudius' sole campaign was of no great importance. The Senate had already voted him triumphal decorations, but he thought it beneath his dignity to accept these, and decided that Britain was the country where a real triumph could be most readily earned.” – *Suetonius Divus Claudius* 17.

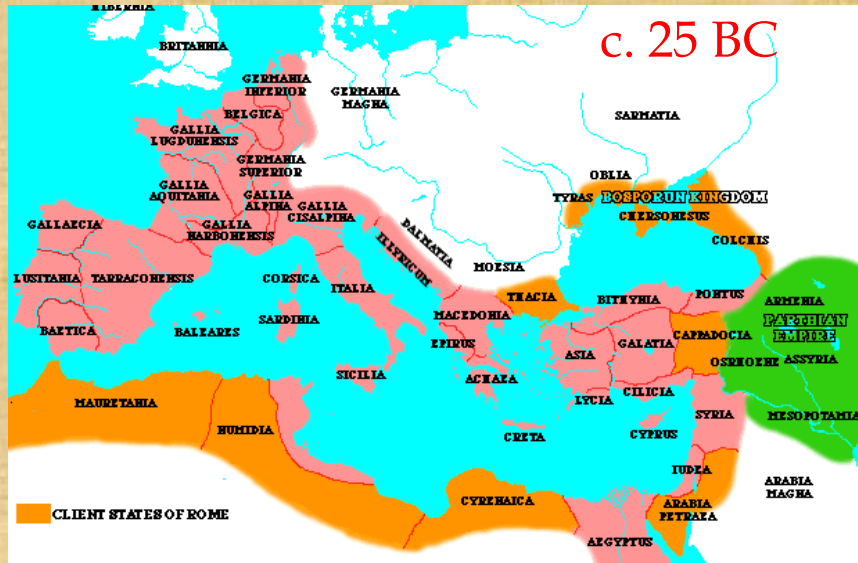
- ▣ Expansion now based, to a large extent, on the views and characters of the emperors.

Fear of Ambitious Generals

- ▣ Tiberius was reportedly jealous of Germanicus' successes beyond the Rhine – **Tacitus *Annals* 2.26.**

“Domitian reacted as he often did: he pretended to be pleased when in fact he was deeply disturbed. He was conscious of the ridicule that his sham triumph over Germany had excited, when he had brought slaves in the market to dress them up and make them look like prisoners of war. But now came a genuine victory on a grand scale... He knew that there was nothing so dangerous for him as to have the name of a subject exalted above that of the emperor.” – **Tacitus *Agricola* 39.**

Development of the Roman Frontier



Romanisation?

- Earlier scholarship had credited Roman expansion with the dissemination of Greco-Roman culture and customs – marginalising / replacing pre-Roman customs.
- Adoption of Roman customs by elite for self-advancement.
- Roman preferences for those adopting outwards vestiges of Roman culture.
- Hybridization – cross-cultural exchange.

“Agricola had to deal with people living in isolation and ignorance, and therefore prone to fight; and his object was to accustom them to a life of peace and quiet by the provision of amenities. He therefore gave private encouragement and official assistance to the building of temples, public squares, and good houses... Furthermore, he educated the sons of the chiefs in the liberal arts... The result was that instead of loathing the Latin language they became eager to speak it effectively. In the same way, our national dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen. And so the population was gradually led into the demoralizing temptations of arcades, baths, and sumptuous banquets. The unsuspecting Britons spoke of such novelties as ‘civilisation’, when in fact they were only features of their enslavement.” – **Tacitus *Agricola* 21.**

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