# The Destruction of Poleis in the Greek World

Michael Hale
Professor John W.I. Lee
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## Table of Contents

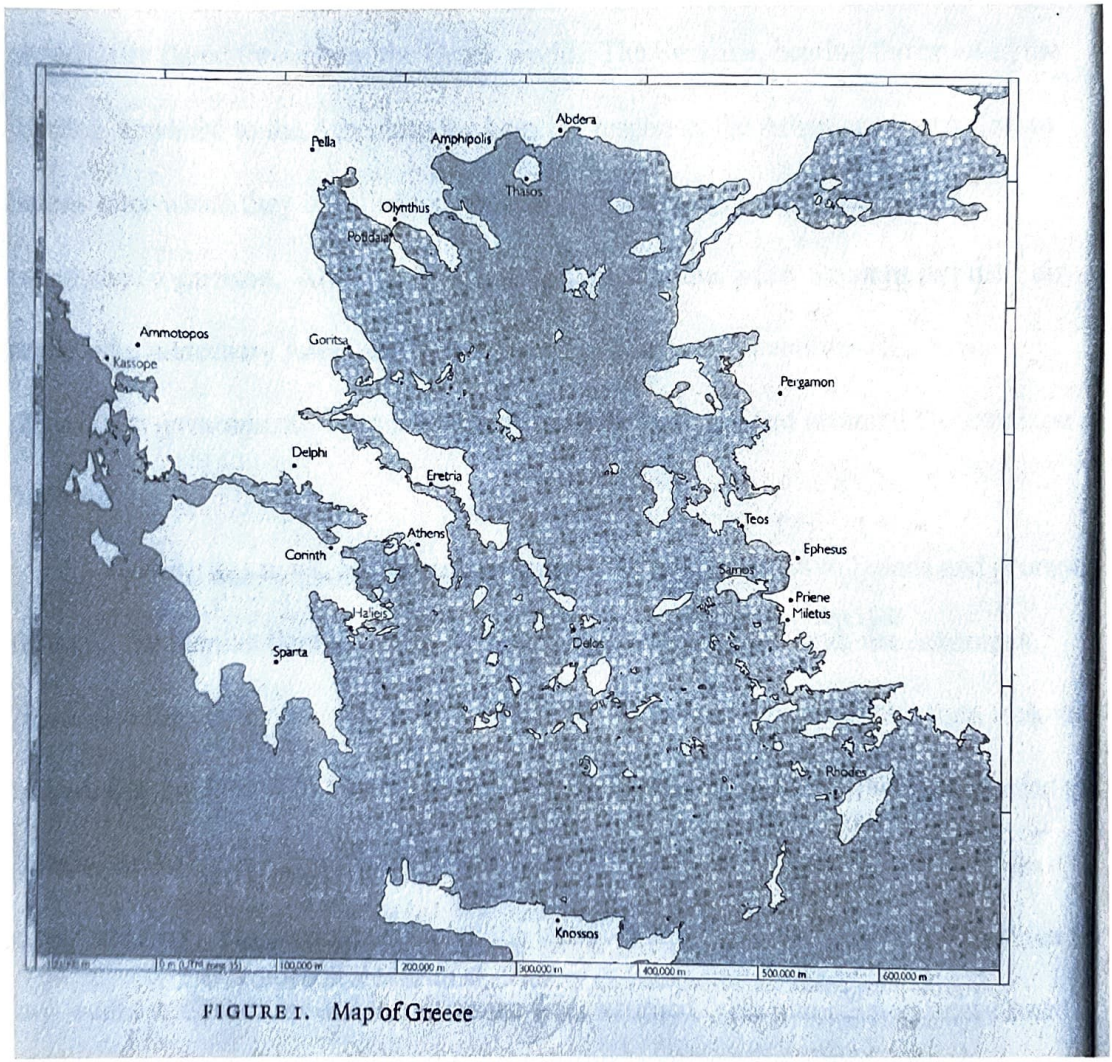


FIGURE 1. Map of Greece

**Map of the Greek World**

# Chapter 1: Introduction

In 441 B.C., just six years into the thirty years' truce Athens and Sparta had agreed to during the Peloponnesian War, war erupted between the cities of Miletos and Samos. Although Athens and Sparta had ceased major hostilities, conflict still periodically flared throughout the Greek world. The Samians, bearing the brunt of the fighting, appealed to the Athenians for help. In response, the Athenians sent a fleet to Samos after which they installed a democracy, took hostages as collateral, and established a garrison. After the Athenians returned home, a few Samians left their city, recruited a mercenary force, and then returned to Samos and overthrew the new democratic government. They then recovered their hostages and resumed the attack on Miletos.[1]

Hearing this news, the Athenians sent a fleet of sixty ships to Samos and promptly defeated the Samian fleet in battle. Establishing position on the land, the Athenians blockaded the city by building three walls.[2] The Athenian general Pericles then took the majority of the fleet with him to see to problems in Caunus and Caria, which afforded the Samian defenders an opportunity to launch a surprise attack on the depleted Athenian camp and fleet. The Samians defeated the left-over ships and thus controlled their sea for two weeks until Pericles and the Athenian fleet returned.[3] He immediately reinstituted the blockade while more Athenian reinforcements arrived. The Samian defenders again resisted, but they could only hold out for so long, as the siege depleted necessary resources such as food and water. Samos eventually surrendered to Athens after a nine-

[1] *Thuc.* 1.115.
[2] *Thuc.* 1.116.
[3] *Thuc.* 1.117.

month siege, but at a cost. According to the terms of the surrender, Samos had to tear down the city walls, give hostages to the Athenians, surrender its fleet, and make monetary payments to Athens.[4] Such was the price of resistance to an imperial power.

The siege and defeat of Samos serves as a paradigm for how conflicts in the Greek world usually progressed and ended. This of course pertains to wars on a city's territory, where the stakes are much greater than in the open field. In the open field an army or fleet might be defeated, but the home city still survived. In addition, when in the field, the norm for battles in classical antiquity was an open hoplite battle. When a city itself became threatened, not only the soldiers, but the city itself and its residents became vulnerable. The physical destruction of a city was a rather rare occurrence in the Ancient World despite the ubiquity of warfare. Battles usually concluded with a truce and certain penalties paid by the defeated city, which could range from tribute to hostages or even the execution of certain citizens. The actual deliberate destruction of a city after being defeated was fairly uncommon. These unique cases of city destruction, particularly why they were destroyed, are the focus of this thesis.

In exploring the question of why certain cities were destroyed, but not others, I have examined various instances of city destruction in the Greek world during the Archaic and Classical Periods (Sixth to Fourth Centuries B.C.). Through a study of the ancient sources I have found that the quest to extend the imperial powers of Persia, Athens, Sparta, and Macedon often provided the motivation and justification for destroying cities. As such, the destruction of cities usually occurred because an imperial power wished to make an example of a revolting city or expand its territory. In either

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[4] *Thuc.* 1.117.

instance, the destruction of cities was inextricably linked with the practice of siege warfare. When a city refused to surrender peacefully, an aggressor usually needed to implement siege warfare to overcome the physical defenses of a city. Siege warfare required much time and resources, usually leaving the aggressors feeling vengeful and often leading to the destruction of the city in the event of a successful siege. Due to the new siege technologies and strategies under Philip II and Alexander the Great, the destruction of cities inevitably rose as they expanded their empire and city defenses became easier to breach. The destruction of cities in Greece during the Classical Period, especially the latter part under Philip and Alexander, became far more frequent than in the Archaic Period due to the rise of imperial powers, such as Athens and Sparta in Greece, which were able to procure the resources for undertaking siege warfare.

The term "destruction" is a tricky one because the ways in which cities suffered destruction varied significantly. Obviously one could not destroy physical structures in ways possible today, such as by using TNT and other explosives. However, destruction could be wrought through other means. Siege engines played a great role in allowing for the easier physical destruction of a city. For instance, catapults could be used to launch rocks at a fortification wall. Fire served as another simple way to destroy certain structures and land quickly. For the purposes of this paper, I will consider the destruction of a city to entail the physical destruction of at least a major part of a city. Of course the degree of destruction often differed and such a difference in the extent of destruction could help communicate the motives of the aggressors who destroyed the city. For example, the Persians burned the Athenian acropolis and destroyed physical structures, including the sanctuaries. In rebuilding, the Athenians used the broken remains as parts

of their new structures in order to keep a constant reminder of the events rendered during the war. Such damage to physical structures qualifies as destruction under the liberal definition. As the degree and manner of destruction differs greatly from city to city, one finds great difficulty in attempting to quantify how many cities were actually destroyed.

However, Morgan Hansen quantified the frequency of destruction of cities occurring in the Archaic and Classical Periods. Based on his analysis, he believes that there existed "113 cases of *andrapodismos* [enslavement of a population] or expulsion of the population of a polis and/or destruction of its urban centre."[5] Of these instances involving any of these three outcomes, he argues that only "about a score" of the cities suffered annihilation. He believes that the cases of city destruction described by the ancient authors "must have been less effective and disastrous than appears in the accounts."[6] Nevertheless, Hansen's count is influenced by what he considers destruction. He even acknowledges that many of these cases of enslavement and destruction are speculative, relying on the implications of the authors. The cases with extensive literary and/or archaeological evidence are indeed minimal. Even so, the frequency of city destruction which Hansen proposes helps quantify the rather rare event.

### 1.2: The Scholarly Conversation

My project approaches the historical and archaeological sources from a new perspective. While scholars have studied the same sources and case studies, they have done so within different contexts and with different aims in mind. For instance, in

[5] Hansen and Nielsen (2004) 121.
[6] Hansen and Nielsen (2004) 122.

Ancient Siege Warfare, Paul Kern mentions some examples of city destruction, but he does not give them any special significance distinguishing them from the other examples of besieged cities.[7] My research demonstrates a strong link between siege warfare and the destruction of cities in that siege warfare almost always proved necessary to breach a city's defenses and thus allowed for the destruction of the city itself. The physical toll and drain of resources associated with siege warfare made it much more likely that the aggressors would destroy the city. Although Kern does not approach the topic of siege warfare with the same end in mind, his work has nevertheless proven to be of the utmost importance because it traces the development of siege technology and techniques and addresses the treatment of captured cities and their populations, which are both themes of my project. My research attempts to make broader connections across time that relate to the destruction of cities, including how changes in the nature of Greek political entities with respect to their power, resources, and influence as well as developments in siege warfare tactics and technology fueled the rise in the number of city destructions as time progressed from the Archaic to Classical Period and beyond.

My research is also informed by the work of Nancy Demand in Urban Relocation in Archaic and Classical Greece: Flight and Consolidation. Demand attempts to answer the question "Why did the Greeks move cities?"[8] Previous scholars had assumed that environmental, economic, and social factors caused urban relocations, but Demand argues that "Greeks moved cities not for any of the assumed reasons but only in the face of an overwhelming external threat to their continued existence as autonomous political

[7] Kern (1999).
[8] Demand (1990) 6.

entities."[9] Thus, she argues that the relocation of cities in the Greek world came about due to defensive and survival needs. My project examines what happened to the populations of destroyed cities. In the case of the Persian destruction of Miletos in 494 B.C., the Persians actually relocated those Milesians whom they captured.[10] In a sense, one could argue that the Persians actually moved the city itself because the city is not only its physical setting and structures, but also the people that make up the city. Demand's work helps me to contextualize the specific instance of relocation in Miletos within the broader movement of urban relocation as a whole.

Archaeological evidence also informs my study of city destruction. I have examined both field reports and the secondary sources that comment on and compile the archaeological evidence. Fortifications played a vital role as the last physical means of defense separating the defending city from the aggressors. In examining this archaeological evidence and the overall context within which the scholarly discussion exists, I have relied on works concerning Greek fortifications, such as A.W. McNicoll's Hellenistic Fortifications From the Aegean to the Euphrates. McNicoll argues that changes in siege warfare tactics and technology in the late fourth century B.C. influenced the innovations and developments of defensive fortifications. He also argues that the invention of the catapult in 400 B.C. and the torsion engine by the Macedonians in 350 B.C. constituted the two most influential technological developments in siege warfare because they "gave the impulse to many of the innovations in fortification-building during the Hellenistic period, although walls still had to be built to resist the ancient

[9] Demand (1990) 5.
[10] *Hdt.* 6.22.

methods of rams, probe, sap, and escalade."[11] These new technologies made necessary new defensive adaptations, such as gateways, towers, battlements, and ditches. McNicoll describes in detail the salient characteristics of the fortifications, comparing and contrasting the features of sites through a chronological progression. Using mostly archaeological evidence, McNicoll's work is especially relevant to my research because it contextualizes the physical defenses and archaeological evidence relevant to city destruction, something that cannot be obtained from the ancient sources.

The secondary sources have helped me flesh out the key questions and issues addressed by scholars within limited contexts, such as siege warfare and urban relocation. On the other hand, my project deals with city destruction and its causes in a broader framework, which has not been attempted in a similar way by scholars.

### 1.3: Sources

While taking the secondary literature into account, I have focused my research on the texts of the Ancient Historians. The various authors I have included in my study are Arrian, Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, Plutarch, and Thucydides among others. Within their various accounts of wars, campaigns, and famous lives, I have focused on the main examples of city destruction along with the commentary of the authors. The style and level of detail differ from author to author as well as city to city. Some cities such as Olynthus receive limited coverage and not much detail while others such as Thebes receive extensive coverage from multiple authors. Through the study of these examples

[11] McNicoll (1997) 4.

of city destruction I have arrived at my conclusions regarding why certain cities were destroyed.

The paucity of examples of city destruction relative to the overall instances of battles in classical antiquity helped determine the evidence I used to draw general conclusions. I have focused on the cases of city destruction which are most extensively covered in the works of the Ancient Historians as well as the archaeological evidence. Thus, I repeatedly come back to the examples of Athens, Miletos, Olynthus, Samos, and Thebes. I have also chosen to focus on these cities because they allow me to work with different Ancient Historians, as this select group of cities draws from the authors mentioned above. In terms of archaeology, I have chosen Olynthus and Paphos because I have access to the extensive excavation reports from these sites as well as the literary sources. Being able to compare and contrast the literary and archaeological evidence creates a much more compelling picture of city destruction. Words cannot always be trusted and so archaeology can be used to interpret and contextualize the finds at a site. On the other hand, archaeology plays a vital role in providing evidence that the Ancient Historians often either fail to mention, including the minutiae of city destruction. However, archaeology's drawback is that it does not provide a narrative voice to events, making it difficult to ascertain the perceptions and motives of those in the distant past, which literary sources make more feasible.

One potential drawback of the literary sources is their inherent bias. Each author has his own goal in writing, an intended audience, as well as his own personal biases against specific people, groups, and places. On a general level, the Greek authors clearly have a bias against the Persians and other non-Greeks, though they usually attempt to

maintain the appearance of or claim objectivity. Modern historians especially question the use and authenticity of speeches in the works of the ancient historians, especially by Herodotus and Thucydides. Some argue that these speeches, especially pre-battle exhortations, are simply used as rhetorical devices and embellishments. On the other hand, historians such as Simon Hornblower argue that "every speech must be examined on its own merits."[12] He argues that a paradox exists with respect to ancient literature in that war is so prominent in them, but that the ancients did not regard war as a "natural state of affairs." His ultimate solution to the paradox is "to accept it," for "we can read behind, and between the lines of, the literary records, and we do have copious documentary (mainly inscriptional) evidence with which to supplement and correct them."[13]

Some such as Herodotus and Thucydides were strictly observers and he recorded the accounts given to them by others, whereas others such as Arrian and Xenophon served as military commanders and thus either recorded personal experience in their narratives or had experiences which would give them the ability to speak from personal experience in similar situations. Even Thucydides himself admitted the problem with speeches, stating that of the things he himself heard or heard from others "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."[14] Concerning the reliability of information gathered from sources, he

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[12] Hornblower (2007) 39.
[13] Hornblower (2007) 53.
[14] *Thuc.* 1.22.

laments the "coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eyewitnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other."[15] While the literary sources are far from perfect, we must do as Hornblower suggests and read between the lines, filling in the gaps with archaeological, especially inscriptional evidence.

[15] *Thuc.* 1.22.

# Chapter 2: Background

Warfare incessantly flared up in the Greek world between the various cities in the Greek world. The Greek polis, or city-state, first formed during the archaic period and continued to develop into the Classical period. After the Classical period, the number and power of poleis declined, but they still remained active players in the Greek world. Hansen identifies four different senses of the word polis, as a "stronghold," "nucleated settlement," "territory," and "political community."[16] In a single, encompassing term, polis is generally translated as city-state. Once more poleis became established, they fought over land, which led to armed conflicts and warfare. Such warfare became especially intense between the rising powers, such as Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes. However, such powers did make alliances and peace treaties with each other, especially when presented with a common foe, such as the Persian Empire.

The Greek-Persian Wars during the first of half of the 5th Century B.C. constituted one of the first major conflicts in the Classical Greek world. Persia presented a common enemy against which the Greek poleis could unite. The Persians differed from the Greeks in all manners of life, including politics, religion, and customs. Whereas Greek poleis could be politically managed by aristocracies, democracies, and dictators, the Persian King sat as the single ruler over his whole Empire, managing it by placing satraps to rule over the various satrapies (provinces). The Greek mocked the dress and customs of the Persians, tending to portray the Persians as effeminate. Such renditions of the Persians as effeminate are portrayed in the writing of Herodotus and through depiction on pottery.

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[16] Hansen and Nielsen (2004) 39.

The Ionian revolt from 499 until 493 B.C. initially sparked the tensions between the Greek poleis and the Persian Empire. The Greeks in Ionia revolted against the Persian Empire due to rising taxes and the "puppet" tyrants which the Persians had placed on the Greek cities. Aristagoras, the tyrants of Miletos, incited the revolt by riling up the Greek cities in the region against Persia by citing these transgressions.[17] The Greek cities burned down the Persian city Sardis, which would serve as the Persian "pretext for burning diving sanctuaries in Hellas" when it later invaded Greece. The Persian force defeated the Ionian Greeks holed up in Miletos and destroyed the city. Darius, the King of Persia, then invaded Greece in 492 B.C followed by Xerxes in the late 480s. After the Persians defeated the Spartans at Thermopylae, the Greeks ended the war victorious at Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale. Athens' navy played a vital role in defeating the Persians, especially at the Battle of Salamis. Thus victorious, the Greeks lost their common enemy and fell back to fighting amongst themselves.

After the Greek-Persian Wars ended with the Peace of Callias in 494 B.C., Athens and Sparta turned against each other when they no longer had a common foreign enemy. The Athenians established the Delian League after the Persian Wars, consisting of many of the other Greek poleis, which ostensibly meant to protect against further Persian threat as well as to take vengeance. However, this League turned into a treasury for the Athenians as they required each of these poleis to contribute resources for the upkeep of the League – for which the Athenians took the most responsibility. Further, the Athenians used the funds which they haggled from their allies in the League to fund and expand their Empire. These financial resources played a key role in allowing Athens to

[17] *Hdt.* 5.101-102.

participate in siege warfare and technological development, which it had witnessed first hand when the Persians invaded Greece. Athens and Sparta came to arms in the Peloponnesian War during the second half of the fifth century B.C., These two powers established themselves as imperial presences in the Greek world due to their ample resources and military might. Athens held supremacy at the sea, while Sparta reigned supreme on the land. However, Athens did hold the edge in financial resources due to the league and their territorial acquisitions. The Spartans and their allies strove to break the Athenian Empire through their advantage on the land. After a long, drawn-out war, the Athenians came up on the short end of the stick and lost to the Spartans at the final battle when they agreed to surrender terms. The Athenians could keep their city, but they had to tear down the Long Walls and fortifications at Piraeus as well as reduce the navy to a fleet of twelve ships. At this moment, Athens lost much of its power and influence as an imperial power. Sparta would soon lose its hegemony as well partly because it bit off more than it could chew. It was not especially prepared to stretch its resources and attempt to control various parts of Greece. In addition, the rise of a new imperial power would provide a serious threat to its hegemony as well as that of Athens.

The independent, autonomous poleis of the fifth century mostly ended with the rise of Macedon in the Fourth Century B.C. Macedon initially began as a backwater from which Philip II and Alexander the Great propelled it to new heights. Philip initially reformed the army, including his implementation of the phalanx *sarissa*. He revolutionized tactics and technology in warfare, especially in sieges. In doing so, Macedon became a military power and thus the major political power in the Greek world, able to assert its power almost at will over the Greek cities. Alexander continued the

legacy of his father and while expanding the Macedonian Empire he ventured to Persia in order to defeat the Persians and gain more territory. He claimed to do so in order to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece in the Fifth Century. After much campaigning, he created a vast empire, ruling it by establishing garrisons and founding cities. He left behind commanders and troops in order to rule each region. Alexander then died in 323 B.C., after which his empire would soon fall apart.

# Chapter 3: Motives for City Destruction

The destruction of a city was the most devastating consequence for a city which lost a battle or war in the Greek world. The aggressors who destroyed cities did so for only a limited number of reasons. At first glance, it seems that the aggressors would not have much to gain from physically destroying a city. By leaving a city intact and simply penalizing the city inhabitants, the aggressors could receive tribute payment from the city, take hostages to insure further compliance, weaken the army and navy, or even enslave and/or kill citizens or leadership of the city. Those who destroyed cities chose to ignore these possible benefits because they had other motives in mind. The destruction of cities usually occurred because an imperial power wished to either make an example of a revolting city or expand its territory. While certainly not true in every case, imperial powers accounted for the majority of city destructions due to their resources militarily and financially. The other major factor in the destruction of cities is siege warfare, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Destruction involving siege warfare usually involved imperial powers and occurred within the context of expanding and asserting their hegemony, but occurred more frequently as either planned punishment for forcing a protracted siege or unplanned aggression when the soldiers entered the wall and rampaged through the city.

### 3.2: Planned vs. Unplanned City Destruction

First, we must make a distinction between planned and unplanned city destruction. Planned city destruction occurred when an army's leadership deliberately

decided to destroy a city, either before they breached the city or afterwards. An example of planned city destruction is Alexander's decision to raze Thebes to the ground after he successfully entered the city and then consulted with his allies concerning the fate of Thebes. The decision thus demonstrated preconceived and well-formulated motives relating the need to assert imperial power. The destruction occurred while Alexander continued to expand his empire and so he also used the destruction to punish Thebes for revolting and to display the punishment as a warning to other Greek cities revolting or planning to revolt. As Kern notes, the "political" decision to destroy Thebes "suggests that his ruthlessness was calculated," as "he could be more generous if political considerations called for it."[18] Planned city destruction therefore constituted a formal decision made by the leadership of the aggressors.

On the other hand, unplanned city destruction occurred when the aggressors destroyed a city or parts of it without a preconceived notion to do so. Unplanned destruction usually occurred when soldiers, either individually or as a group, became unruly or in some cases provoked. Unplanned city destruction could include soldiers burning down houses and fields, which might burn down an entire city. An army might also be incited to destroy a city without prior intention to do so. For instance, the Persians did not go to Samos in 515 B.C. with the intention of destroying the city and killing its population. Rather, the Persians believed that the Samians would be compliant.[19] The Persian King Darius had ordered his general Otanes not to kill any of the Samians. However, when the Samians unexpectedly rushed out from the walls

[18] Kern (1999) 228.
[19] *Hdt.* 3.146.

against the Persians, Otanes immediately ordered his forces to kill all the Samians.[20] The decision to destroy the city's population was unplanned and thus lacked a clear imperial motive. Instead, the decision to kill the population was based on a spontaneous reaction to the situation at hand. While the initial killing occurred unplanned, the subsequent killing of all the inhabitants and the physical damage to the city occurred as an extension of the initial reaction, but served as punishment for the population for revolting and breaching a supposed agreement.[21] Of course, planned and unplanned destruction could occur within the same campaign.

### 3.3: The Motives of Imperial Powers

The most common motive for city destruction was the desire of an imperial power to assert its hegemony by making an example of a city which had revolted against it. In 494 B.C., the Persian King sent out an expedition in order to put down the cities which had revolted against Persia in the Ionian Revolt. The forces gathered at Miletos and the Persians besieged and razed the city. Before beginning the siege, the Persian generals shouted out to the Milesians that if they surrendered, they would not be harmed and their property would not be destroyed.[22] On the other hand, if they refused, the generals shouted in common that "we shall lead them into captivity as slaves, and we shall turn their sons into eunuchs and drag their virgin daughters away to Baktria and give over

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[20] *Hdt.* 3.147.
[21] *Hdt.* 3.149.
[22] *Hdt. 6.9.*

their lands to others."[23] In doing so, they also took as booty considerable wealth from the city, probably "to provide booty for their soldiers or to compensate for the damage caused by the Ionian Revolt that Miletos had instigated."[24] The total physical destruction of the city and the physical transference of its population served to demonstrate to the other cities what would happen to others choosing to revolt against the might of the Persian Empire.

At Thebes in 335 B.C., Alexander decided to physically destroy Thebes because the Thebans had revolted against Macedon, they threatened to join with the Athenians or Spartans, and forced Alexander to besiege the city and use his army once he arrived, and to appease his allies. Each aspect of the decision thus dealt with factors important to an imperial power. Diodorus speculates that Alexander would have spared the city had it surrendered initially when Alexander delayed and might have accepted a peace treaty.[25] While expanding his empire, Alexander constantly had to be wary of possible threats. Thebes at this point was a relatively powerful city, especially if it could combine its resources with those of Athens or Sparta, which both sporadically attempted to throw off the yoke of Macedonian imperialism. As will be discussed further on, the fact that the Thebans forced Alexander to engage in siege warfare made the destruction of the city much more likely for a variety of reasons. Lastly, Alexander wanted to make an example of Thebes for the rest of the Greek world and his allies wanted to see Thebes suffer for the wrongs that they had committed in the present and past against the Greeks as a whole. As Diodorus states, Alexander "decided to destroy the city utterly and by this act of terror

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[23] *Hdt.* 6.9.
[24] Greaves (2002) 132.
[25] *Diod. Sic.* 17.9.

take the heart out of anyone else who might venture to rise against him."[26] The destruction of the city "presented possible rebels among the Greeks with a terrible warning."[27]

Diodorus was not the only ancient historian to hold such an opinion. Plutarch argued that the razing occurred "because Alexander expected that the Greeks would be terrified by so great a disaster and cower down in quiet."[28] Alexander was politically shrewd in his motives as well, not only making an example of those that had rebelled, but doing a kindness to those who did not wish to rebel and those friendly to him. Plutarch states that Alexander did not enslave those inhabitants who were either descendants of Pindar, friends of the Macedonians, or had voted against the revolt.[29] The destruction of so great a power in the Greek world did indeed have its intended effect of frightening the rest of the Greeks, but it by no means ceased further revolts. Arrian calls it a great calamity suffered by the Greeks as a whole "both on account of the magnitude of the captured city and the celerity of the action."[30] Thus, Alexander physically destroyed Thebes and enslaved the population in order to punish a rebelling city, to send a warning to other cities, and to appease his allies. Such were the common motives of an imperial power resulting in a city's destruction.

Philip II's political motives for the destruction of cities were similar in his quest to expand the borders of Macedon. In the midst of his campaign "to subdue the cities of Hellespont," Philip decided to conquer Olynthus, a city in the region with which he had

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[26] *Diod. Sic.* 17.9.
[27] *Diod. Sic.* 17.14.
[28] *Plut. Alex.* XI.
[29] *Plut. Alex.* XI.
[30] *Arr. Ana.* 1.9.

previously made an alliance. After he captured the city, he plundered and razed it. The motive of punishment did not play as great a role as in other instances, but Philip still wanted to intimidate the other cities which might think to resist him. He also used the booty taken from the city to fund his war effort.[31] In addition, the destruction of Olynthus came as a result of the prolonged siege, which will be discussed more in the section on siege warfare. In short, armies were not in a good mood after spending multiple months besieging a city.

The Persian destruction of the Athenian acropolis demonstrates another of the key motives for city destruction: revenge. The desire to enact revenge also played a key role in Alexander's decision to raze Thebes to the ground, since his allies all wanted to enact revenge for past transgressions against the Greeks. In the case of Athens, while the Persians attacked Athens as part of the Greek-Persian Wars, the physical destruction can be at least partially attributed to a desire for revenge. Once the Persians made their way onto the acropolis, they "plundered the sanctuary and set the whole Acropolis on fire."[32] According to Herodotus, part of the motivation for the destruction of the acropolis and temples was the destruction of Sardis by the Greeks earlier during the Ionian revolt. Much of the destruction rendered by the Persians can also perhaps be considered unplanned, as they burned down cities near Athens, including Thespiai and Plataea.[33] The Persians did not necessarily have any set plan with the fire other than to cause intermittent destruction.

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[31] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.
[32] *Hdt.* 8.53.
[33] *Hdt.* 8.50.

While many reasons existed for aggressors to destroy a city, the majority of city destructions resulted from a desire of imperial powers to expand their empires politically through their military might and so punish rebelling cities and warn others what would happen if they acted in a similar manner. Other than this need to exercise imperial hegemony, siege warfare played the biggest role in influencing whether a city was destroyed or not.

# Chapter 4: Siege Warfare and the Destruction of Cities

> When men leave their own territory to meet combat and danger beyond its borders, the survivors of any disaster which strike them, on land or at sea, still have native soil and state and fatherland between them and utter extinction. But when it is in defense of the fundamentals – shrines and fatherland and parents and children and so on – that the risks are to be run, the struggle is not the same, or even similar. A successful repulse of the enemy means safety, intimidated opponents, and the unlikelihood of attack in the future, whereas a poor showing in the face of danger leaves no hope of salvation. [...] However, should some calamity none the less occur, those who are left may at any rate recoup their losses later on, just like certain Greeks who have known total failure but recovered from it.
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> (*Aen. Tact.* Pref. 1-2, 4; trans. Whitehead 1990)

While motives indeed proved important, the occurrence itself of siege warfare greatly increased the chance that a city would be destroyed. In order to enter and have the opportunity to destroy a city, the aggressors needed to find a way to breach a city's defenses. When the defenders of a city fortified themselves within their walls, the options became limited for both sides. Considering the difficulty of breaching strong city defenses, the most common outcome was either the aggressors cutting their losses and leaving, or formulating a truce with the defenders. A city's inhabitants often knew that they could not survive indefinitely without external food and supplies. In some cases, the defenders were sufficiently well supplied that they refused negotiation in hopes that the aggressors would leave after a failed siege. In either case, if the defenders refused to submit, the attacking force either gave up or began siege warfare against the city. The siege of a city included measures to prevent the city from receiving food and supplies as well as offensive maneuvers meant to destroy or bypass the fortifications of the city. However, siege warfare usually proved to be the last option for the aggressors because of the large amount of time and resources needed to conduct a siege. The relative lack of offensive technology against fortifications in the sixth and fifth centuries meant that sieges usually lasted longer than they did in the fourth century because one of the only

options was to blockade the city and hopefully starve the defenders into submission.[34] A siege could last a few days, a few months, or even longer depending on the strength of the aggressors and the fortifications. Siege warfare could lead to the destruction of a city but such was not inevitably so.

### 4.2: Siege Warfare in the Archaic Period

The use of the siege warfare in the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. was infrequent, but certain imperial powers used it to reduce city defenses. At this time, the Greek world was largely bereft of the technology for siege machinery and equipment. However, the Persians from the East did have the appropriate siege technology in the early fifth century which the Greek cities lacked. The Persian Empire demonstrated its siege abilities in 494 B.C. when putting down the revolts of Greek cities in Asia Minor. The Ionian Revolt grew out of the long-held bitter sentiments and grievances of the Greeks cities in Ionia over which the Persian Empire imposed its hegemony and will. Aristagoras, the tyrant of Miletos, a large Greek city in Asia Minor, held a personal vendetta against Darius, the Persian King, and incited the Ionian cities to revolt.[35] Ionian contingents marched to Sardis, a Persian city, and set the city on fire. Darius responded by sending a Persian force against the Ionian cities. After already having put down a number of cities in the region, the Persians arrived at Miletos. According to Herodotus, the Persian generals combined their forces into one large contingent and headed for

[34] Krentz (2007) 173.
[35] *Hdt.* 5.102.

Miletos, "regarding the rest of the cities as less important."[36] Miletos' relative importance in terms of relative strength in the region may thus be the reason why the Persians chose to destroy part of Miletos. The other Ionian forces in the region which had revolted rallied around this stronghold. In the naval battle that ensured, the strength and numbers of the Persian forces bested the Ionian forces. Thus, the last hope for the Ionians was the protection behind the fortifications of Miletos.

After their defeat in the naval battle, the defenders holed themselves up behind the city walls and prepared for a siege. Eager to utilize their superior siege technology, the Persians, Herodotus wrote, "besieged Miletos by land and sea, dug beneath the walls, and used every kind of siege engine against it."[37] Herodotus supplies few details pertaining to what type of siege engines the Persians used, but the Persians successfully breached the walls of Miletos. Nevertheless, the use of siege engines against Miletos by the Persians serves as one of the earliest examples of the effective reduction of fortifications in the Greek world. The ability to circumvent or destroy defensive fortifications increased greatly with the development of new siege technology, including artillery, during the late fifth and especially fourth centuries.

The technology and tactics of the Persians proved significant in changing the face of warfare in the Greek world. The Greeks borrowed and modified such technology and tactics from the Persians and others in the Near East. The Persians themselves used and adapted methods and technology from the Assyrians. This Assyrian siege technology included "the battering ram, and Assyrian siege tactics such as sapping and scaling ladders and the use of massed archery and slingers from siege towers to divert defenders'

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[36] *Hdt.* 6.6.
[37] *Hdt.* 6.18.

attention away from combat engineers."[38] Even the Medes, especially under Cyaxares, made use of siege engines before the Achaemenid dynasty came to power.[39] The Persians taught the Greeks such methods as early as the Ionian Revolt. After the majority of the Ionian cities revolted, the Cyprians also revolted. Onesilos, who seized power from his brother, Gorgos, King of Salamis, initially persuade the Cyprians to revolt.[40] According to F.G. Maier, the Cyprian cities probably revolted due to "minor political or economic grievances against the Persian administration."[41]In response, the Persians besieged all of the Cyprian cities save Salamis. After one year, "the Cyprians were reduced to slavery all over again" and "they divided the [Cyprian] cities among themselves and laid waste to them."[42] Without specific details from Herodotus, we do not have much information about these Cyprian cities which the Persians defeated.

However, archaeological evidence can give clear evidence of how a siege occurred. Along with the other cities in Cyprus, the Persians laid siege to the city Paphos. Herodotus does not mention the city by name, but it may surely be included under the broad category of those cities laid waste. Such a determination is possible due to the archaeological evidence found in an excavation of the site. The Persians attacked the Northeast Gate where the excavators found "elaborate siege and countersiege works constructed."[43] Specifically, the Persians built a siege ramp leading up to the walls. The excavation revealed a huge mound, originally even larger but later cleanup efforts by the

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[38] Farrokh (2007) 39.
[39] Farrokh (2007) 33.
[40] *Hdt.* 5.115.
[41] Maier (1984) 192.
[42] *Hdt.* 5.116
[43] Maier (1984) 194.

city in the Fourth Century B.C. removed some of the debris from the front of the walls.[44] Inside the mound, excavators found ash, wood, bones, architectural fragments and other archaeological evidence. The remains included "more than 500 javelin points, spearheads, and arrowheads of both iron and bronze" as well as the only Greek bronze helmet ever found in a "battle context."[45] Maier believes that the 450 round limestones might be "ammunition for some kind of stone-throwing engine," possible evidence for the early use of catapults, which scholars have usually attributed to Dionysios I at Motya in 399 B.C.[46] Even more intriguing is the maneuvers the defenders took to defend against the Persians.

The Persians built their ramp from the debris of an Archaic sanctuary which they had destroyed in front of the walls. They combined this debris with earth and trees.[47] Before raising the ramp up to the city walls, the Persians filled in the ditches in front of the walls with debris. As the Persians constructed the ramp, the two sides continually fought each other, which Maier interprets from "the quantity of missiles found."[48] The defenders inside the walls of the city attempted to counter the siege ramp by undermining it. The excavation revealed a number of trenches dug under the city walls from inside the city which lead out under the siege ramp. From inside the tunnels, the defenders used fire – "the burning of the supporting timbers caused part of the mound to collapse; the fire was so intense that the ramp above the cauldrons was burned into a compact mass. From

[44] Maier (1984) 197.
[45] Maier (1984) 198.
[46] Maier (1984) 200.
[47] Maier (1984) 202.
[48] Maier (1984) 202.

this method of mining it may be inferred that the Persians used siege-engines."[49] Maier notes that the Persians likely used siege towers on the ramps in order to eliminate the defenders on the top of the wall, which is evidenced on Assyrian reliefs. Such tactics and innovations, specifically the siege-mound and mine, "were formidable weapons of the siege tactics borrowed by the Persians, and later the Greeks, from the Assyrians."[50] The Greeks began using these tactics and technology in greater frequency after the Persian invasion during the Greek-Persian Wars. The case of Paphos demonstrates how archaeology proves vital in understanding the question of city destruction. Even without literary evidence mentioning the specific destruction of Paphos, the archaeological evidence can be used to reconstruct the siege that occurred and to better understand Persian siege tactics and defensive strategies.

The Persians implemented other devices and strategies to overcome fortifications. They demonstrated their penchant for innovation and adaptation in 480 B.C. when they attacked Athens during the Greek-Persian Wars. As the Persians approached Athens on the march, they burned down cities which they passed on the way including Thespiai and Plataea.[51] Burning was quick and required few resources, while the main objective remained Athens. Once they arrived at Athens, they found that it had been deserted by the majority of its citizens. However, the few remaining "had barricaded themselves on the acropolis with a rampart of doors and planks of wood."[52] The Persians still decided to conduct a smaller scale siege against these men. Instead of siege engines such as rams, ramps, and ladders, and digging under walls, the Persians used fire arrows against the

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[49] Maier (1984) 202.
[50] Maier (1984) 203.
[51] *Hdt.* 8.50.
[52] *Hdt.* 8.51.

wooden barricade which the defenders had erected.[53] While the aggressors in siege warfare conducted sieges, the defenders were not simply passive spectators. As the Persians rained fire arrows upon them, the defenders rolled large boulders down upon the Persians when they came close to the barricade.[54] The breach or destruction of the fortifications did not always prove necessary to enter the city. The aggressors always looked for other means to bypass the fortifications, including trickery, deceit, and treachery on the part of one of the defenders. Some of these techniques are described in the writings of Aineias Tacticus, who wrote a manual in the Fourth Century B.C. titled "How to Survive Under Siege." For instance, he describes ways in which a gatekeeper can betray a city or inhabitants of a city can send signals to those outside of the city.[55] At Athens, the Persians found an alternate way up the cliff to the acropolis which bypassed the barricade.[56] Thus, the Persians overcame the last defenders on the acropolis through their siege methods and ingenuity.

### 4.3: Siege Warfare in the Classical Period

In Classical Greece, siege warfare did not play a large role until the birth of the Athenian Empire partly because not enough wealth was available in Greece. The revenue generated through the empire, especially through the Delian League and the mandatory payments the member poleis paid to Athens, made siege warfare possible for the

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[53] *Hdt.* 8.52.
[54] *Hdt.* 8.52.
[55] *Aen. Tact.* 8.20.
[56] *Hdt.* 8.53.

Athenians.[57] To finance the construction of siege engines, the development of siege technology, and the procurement of food and other resources to manage forces engaged in a long, drawn out siege one required sufficient resources. In addition to lack of significant wealth, siege warfare did not play a large role until this point because the Greeks had not yet had significant exposure to the techniques and technologies of the Persians, which they would implement after constantly encountering them in the early to middle Fifth Century B.C. The Athenians used siege equipment in most of their sieges, including those at Naxos, Thasos, Samos, and Mytilene. One of their main tools was the battering ram.[58] Against Mytilene and later against Syracuse in the late fifth century, the Athenians also made prominent use of counter-walls, or circumvallation walls. Some historians postulate that the Athenians learned or borrowed some of these techniques and strategies from the Persian Empire.[59] Siege warfare became prominent in the Greek world by the end of the fifth century, especially with respect to those powers that had the resources necessary to conduct siege warfare, including Athens and Sparta.

Even prominent besiegers became susceptible to being besieged, such as Athens at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C. At this point, the Athenians were in dire straits because they were losing the war against the Spartans and plague spread throughout the city. Nevertheless, they readied themselves for a siege by the Spartans and their allies. In preparation for the siege, the Athenians in the city "resolved to block up all harbors except one, to station guards, and in all other respects to get ready for a

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[57] Kern (1999) 80.
[58] Strauss (2007) 238.
[59] Strauss (2007) 238.

siege."[60] Since the Athenians refused to surrender, the Spartans began a siege, leaving the Athenians with little hope because they had "neither ships, nor allies, nor provisions."[61] However, the Athenians continued to endure the siege even though many of them were starving. As an example of how the aggressors usually attempted to avoid prolonged sieges, the Spartans proposed peace terms to the Athenians, calling for them to tear down a portion of their Long Walls. Tearing down the Long Walls would constitute subservience to the Spartans. Defiant as ever, the defenders proclaimed that they would not accept any terms "involving the destruction of the walls."[62] In the end, the Athenians had suffered enough and many had starved to death. As a result, they eventually accepted a settlement with the Spartans by which they would tear down their Long Walls, give up most of their ships, and adhere to a few other terms."[63] Many of the Spartan allies wanted to destroy the city, but the Spartans decided that they would not do so to "a Greek city which had done great service amid the greatest perils that had befallen Greece," which is a reference to the Athenian participation in the Greek-Persian Wars earlier in the fifth century.[64] Even the most powerful entities in the Greek world possessing strong fortifications were susceptible to siege warfare. The Athenians may not have had their defenses breached, but they could not withstand the blockade indefinitely without suffering mass starvation.

Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, arrived at the cusp of the fourth century. He constantly waged war in Sicily and the Italian Peninsula, either against the Syracusean

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[60] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.4.
[61] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.10.
[62] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.10.
[63] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.19.
[64] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.20.

and Italian Greeks, or especially against his main rival, the Carthaginians. In these campaigns, Diodorus made frequent use of siege warfare, constantly developing and experimenting with siege machinery and other military technology. Diodorus Siculus describes how in preparing for war with the Carthaginians, his purpose was to "make great numbers and every kind of missile, and also quadriremes and quinqueremes, no ship of the latter size having yet been built at that time."[65] He gathered the most able workmen he could find into one place and then spurred them in their development of missiles and engines of war by means of gifts and constant personal encouragement.[66] According to Diodorus, it was when these workmen assembled that the catapult was invented as well, which presented new problems for city defenders.[67]

After a declaration of war upon the Carthaginians in 398 B.C., Dionysius then marched to Motya, a Carthaginian colony. In terms of motivation, Dionysius "hoped that when this city had been reduced by siege, all the others would forth with surrender themselves to him."[68] Aside from his many infantry, cavalry, and warships, Dionysius brought with him many siege engines.[69] Motya planned to resist the siege, expecting that the Carthaginians would come to their aid. The city was located on an island off of Sicily with a causeway linking it to the shore, which the Motyans breached in order to prevent the Syracuseans from using it to approach the city.[70] According to Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius ordered his engineers to construct moles leading across to Motya. He worked on "filling up the strait" and "as the mole was extended, advanced his engines of war

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[65] *Diod. Sic.* 14.41.
[66] *Diod. Sic.* 14.42.
[67] *Diod. Sic.* 14.42.
[68] *Diod. Sic.* 14.49.
[69] *Diod. Sic.* 14.47.
[70] *Diod. Sic.* 14. 48.

little by little towards the walls."[71] Once he completed the Mole, Dionysius used battering-rams against the walls as well as catapults against the defenders on the fortifications. In addition to these engines, "he also advanced against the walls his wheeled towers, six stories high, which he had built to equal the height of houses."[72]

However, it is uncertain whether Dionysius actually used moles to reach the city. The archaeological evidence does not make clear a second construction leading across the water towards Motya. Some scholars have conjectured that perhaps Dionysius rebuilt the causeway and used it to reach the city.[73] The appearance of arrowheads and evidence of burning on the walls suggests that the attack took place on the north side of the island, which supports the theory that Dionysius used the causeway instead of moles.[74] Perhaps the second idea has become more popular because of the connections which scholars can make between it and Alexander's siege of Tyre.[75]

Once Dionysius started using his siege engines against the city's fortifications, the defenders offered resistance. They hurled fire-brands and burning pitch onto the wood of Dionysius' siege engines, the flames of which the Syracuseans attempted to quickly quench.[76] The battering rams eventually "broke down a section of the wall" and so the Syracuseans entered the city and thought that they already had certain victory. However, they actually met fierce resistance within the city itself – urban warfare. The defenders did not wish to be captured and so continued to fight. They made use of the narrow streets in the city as well as houses to barricade themselves. Dionysius actually used his

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[71] *Diod. Sic.* 14.49
[72] *Diod. Sic.* 14.51.
[73] Isserlin (1974) 29.
[74] Isserlin (1974) 29.
[75] Isserlin (1974) 29.
[76] *Diod. Sic.* 14.51.

siege engines within the city itself, which were equal in height to houses. The archaeological evidence suggests that houses of this size were feasible in the area of the North Gate.[77] Diodorus describes the scene as "desperate resistance" and the defenders as having "abandoned hope of life."[78] The siege lasted a few days and Dionysius finally ended it when he attacked unexpectedly at night after having accustomed the defenders to a certain schedule.[79] Thus, Motya fell into the hands of Dionysius, who held total power over the fate of the city and its people.

### 4.4: City Destruction Under Philip I and Alexander the Great

The destruction of cities in the fourth century became much more common due to the advances in siege warfare and technology under Philip II and especially Alexander the Great. Each strove to expand the territory and glory of the Macedonian Empire. Philip initially helped lift it out of the quagmire which it had once been. According to Barry Strauss, the greatest development in the fourth century was the invention of artillery because it "made it possible to knock down walls and capture cities in a matter of weeks rather than years."[80] As a result, sieges drained fewer resources and became more profitable for the aggressors. Siege technology was sufficiently advanced that new developments in fortifications could not combat new siege technology: "Few walls could withstand the siegecraft ability developed by the Macedonians under Philip and

[77] Isserlin (1974) 85.
[78] *Diod. Sic.* 14.51-52.
[79] *Diod. Sic.* 14.53.
[80] Strauss (2007) 241.

Alexander."[81] Philip developed siege warfare in a more "systematic and technical" manner, using all elements of siege warfare in conjunction including "rams, siege towers, catapults, escalade, and undermining in a coordinated way to bring maximum pressure on the city."[82] Philip's strengths in siege warfare also resulted from his use of engineers to help develop new siege technology and his keen understanding of all strategies relevant to siege warfare. Alexander continued the trends of Philip, including the development of new siege technology. While implementing traditional siege equipment such as battering rams, his engineers made new developments in artillery, including the development of a stone-throwing torsion catapult.[83] All of these advances in siege technology and strategy made it much easier for Philip and Alexander to overcome fortifications. As a result, Philip and Alexander breached many more fortifications than was possible a century earlier and thus destroyed more cities.

Though not as advanced as Alexander in siege warfare, Philip II still held a great advantage in siege technology, understanding of strategy, and employment of engineers. Olynthus was one of the cities which Philip destroyed in 348 B.C. He had originally made an alliance with the Olynthians at a time when both Macedon and Athens competed with each other for this alliance and influence over Olynthus, but at this point he felt the need to check the power of Olynthus and thus attempted to conquer it. Philip revolutionized and developed his army with which he rather easily defeated the Olynthians in two separate battles.[84] The Olynthians took shelter behind their walls, which proved to be one of the few defenses Philip could not overcome in a timely manner

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[81] Strauss (2007) 242.
[82] Kern (1999) 198.
[83] Kern (1999) 214.
[84] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.

via his usual methods of siege warfare. Many of his men died when attempting to assault the walls.[85] As usual, when brute force would not work, cunning proved a valuable substitute. Thus, he decided to use one of those other methods of breaching a city's defenses: treachery on the part of one of the defenders. As Diodorus Siculus explains, Philip "bribed the chief officials of the Olynthians [...] and captured Olynthus through their treachery."[86] It is uncertain with what he bribed the officials, though Cahill speculates that "it may have been the treachery of the hipparch Lasthenes that led to the capture."[87] Even with his siege equipment and strategies, it still took Philip three months to subdue Olynthus. Siege campaigns could clearly still drain time and resources against formidable fortifications, though Alexander rarely faced this difficulty.

Alexander the Great serves as the model of supremacy in siege warfare. He both perfected and expanded the methods and technologies passed on to him by his father Philip. As has been noted, the physical destruction or undermining of portions of the fortification wall was not always necessary to breach a city's defenses. For example, Alexander breached the walls of Thebes in 335 B.C without having to use his siege machinery. Thebes and other Greek cities had been revolting at this time because they wished to throw off the power of Macedon, which controlled them either physically through garrisons or through its influence. Many of these cities wished to have their own independence and autonomy. At this point in time, Macedon played the role of most influential power, which Athens and Sparta had previously held in Greece. However, now even these two diminished powers had to worry about their own autonomy and

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[85] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.
[86] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.
[87] Cahill (2002) 46.

survival, as Alexander placed garrisons in Athens as well. Alexander worried about the prospect of a strong Thebes receiving aid from Athens and Sparta. Together they might prove a strong threat to Macedon. Therefore, he marched straight for Thebes in order to put down the revolt.

Interestingly, Alexander had previously placed a garrison in Thebes. When the Thebans revolted, they actually put the garrison itself, which had holed itself up in the Cadmeia, the Theban Citadel, under siege. Before Alexander had arrived, the Thebans "had time to surround the Cadmeia with deep trenches and heavy stockades so that neither reinforcements nor supplies could be sent in."[88] When Alexander arrived, he delayed any offensive maneuvers, hoping to end the revolt peacefully. However, the Thebans refused to surrender and so the two sides came to pitched battle in front of the city. Alexander did not even have to use his siege machines or attempt a blockade because after the Thebans had been routed by Alexander's army, they did not close the gates to the city while retreating into it. Aside from the main gates, the Theban defenders left another gate on the wall deserted in their disorganization and calamity, which allowed the Macedonian forces to enter the city.[89] The Theban forces were so disorganized that they even trampled their own men attempting to reenter the city. Once the Macedonians entered the city and the defenders were distracted and dismayed, the Macedonians in the garrison came out and joined the rout. In this case, Alexander's siege capabilities proved unnecessary because of the formidable might of his army.

Thebes serves as an exception, as Alexander usually relied on his siege prowess to destroy fortifications after he had pushed the defenders back into their city. For instance,

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[88] *Diod. Sic.* 17.8.
[89] *Diod. Sic.* 17.12.

Alexander relied on his siege engines when besieging Miletos in 334 B.C. Whereas the Persians had besieged Miletos in 494 B.C., now Alexander was besieging the Persians. He used his siege engines to bring down the walls and then his troops entered the city through the demolished walls.[90] Alexander himself "personally saw to engines being set against the wall" and the subsequent capture of the city.[91] When he desired, Alexander was usually able to breach the fortifications of a city and did so more frequently than those preceding him because of his strong army and advanced siege tactics and technology.

In all of these cases, the aggressors implemented siege warfare in order to overcome the fortifications of a city which had refused to submit. When a conflict ended with the aggressors breaching the fortifications and entering the city, the chance for the destruction of the city was infinitely greater because the aggressor held total control over the fate of the city and its population. If a city surrendered before a protracted siege had occurred, they usually received "lenient treatment," unless the aggressors really wanted to make an example of the city or had an ulterior motive such as revenge.[92] However, when the protracted siege occurred, the aggressors often had to expend massive resources before they breached the fortifications and put down the resistance. As a result of their unwillingness to surrender and for forcing the aggressors to waste valuable time and resources on a siege, the defenders received the harshest treatment possible by the victors.[93] The besiegers who made it through the fortifications after a prolonged siege often killed many of the defending men when they entered, enslaved a large portion of

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[90] *Arr. Anab.* 1.19.
[91] *Arr. Anab.* 1.19.
[92] Strauss (2007) 241.
[93] Strauss (2007) 240.

the population, and sometimes physically destroyed the city, either by razing or burning it to the ground or by inflicting other physical damage, such as the destruction of temples, houses, and walls, to the city.

The destruction of cities after prolonged sieges was a common theme from the early fifth century through the end of the fourth century B.C. From archaeological evidence, it is clear that after the Persians captured the city of Miletos, the physical destruction of the city "appears to have been almost total."[94] Upon entering the city, the Persians went to the sanctuary of Didyma and after having plundered the temple and oracle burned them down."[95] The archaeological evidence shows the destruction of a temple, though it is difficult to determine whether this destruction occurred under Xerxes or Darius, but in any event, the destruction was not total.[96] Herodotus does not cite a reason for the destruction other than prophecies foretelling the city's demise, but the fact that the city refused to surrender and forced the Persians to lay siege to the city obviously played a large role in the decision to destroy the city. Greaves argues that the Persians wanted to use the wealth from Miletos to recoup the costs of the Ionian Revolt.[97] Prolonged sieges did not always result in the destruction of cities, but when successful they made at least partial destruction much more likely. The prolonged siege of cities such as Miletos makes the attackers much more likely to enact severe punishments against the defenders, including enslavement, death, and the destruction of the city.

Similarly, the siege of those men who barricaded the Acropolis in 480 B.C after the city had been deserted influenced the Persian destruction of Athens. After they made

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[94] Hansen (2004) 1085.
[95] *Hdt.* 6.14.
[96] Greaves (2002) 115.
[97] Greaves (2002) 132.

it up the hill and around the barricade, the Persians killed those taking refuge in the temples and then "plundered the sanctuary and set the whole Acropolis on fire."[98] Xerxes, the King of the Persians, obviously felt he had offended the gods in some way because he subsequently sent Athenian exiles up to the acropolis to make sacrifices.[99] Herodotus also states that an olive tree on the Acropolis which the Persians had burnt down soon grew back, demonstrating some act of the gods.[100] Thus, in this case the destruction of the city was due to several factors, including refusal to surrender, desire for revenge, and the ongoing war between Persia and Greece.

Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, would often enact harsh punishment on a city which refused to surrender. Even if the city did surrender, Dionysius would often deport to inhabitants and then raze the city to the ground, often so that it could not be of use to his enemy, the Carthaginians. Once he had defeated Motya, mass slaughter broke out. The Syracuseans and their allies clearly did not enjoy having to engage in urban combat after they thought they had won the siege by breaking through the walls. Thus, they "slew everyone they encountered, sparing without distinction not a child, not a woman, not an elder."[101] However, Dionysius urged his soldiers to cease the killing because he wished to make money by selling the inhabitants off as slaves. Unable to reason with the soldiers, he yelled at the inhabitants to take shelter in the temples, which saved some until the "fury" of the soldiers died down. He then let his soldiers plunder the city, taking much silver and gold, honored the first man to climb the walls with a monetary reward, and sold the inhabitants who had not been killed off as slaves, with the exception of

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[98] *Hdt.* 8.53
[99] *Hdt.* 8.54
[100] *Hdt.* 8.55
[101] *Diod. Sic.* 14.53.

Greeks fighting for the Carthaginians, whom he killed.[102] Lastly, he placed a garrison in the city. The harsh treatment which Dionysius rendered on the city and its inhabitants follows the common course of what aggressors did when forced to lay siege to a city.

Philip and Alexander did not hesitate to destroy cities if they refused to surrender. Because of their prowess and great ability in reducing a city's defenses with their siege warfare technology and strategies, they were able to enter a city relatively quickly and efficiently. As Philip and then Alexander expanded the Macedonian Empire, one of the pressing concerns became how to manage such a large territory, where it might be difficult to bring forces to put down revolts in distant places of the empire. One solution was to make an example of cities that revolted and refused to surrender to the Macedonians once they arrived to put down the revolt. Olynthus does not necessarily fit this mold because it attempted to surrender and was betrayed at the last moment, but Philip still used their supposed refusal to surrender as a way to set an example for other cities that might choose to resist his power. After he entered the city through the treachery of its officials, he plundered the city.[103] In addition, the archaeological evidence confirms that he physically destroyed the city. Lead bullets found in the archaeological excavation also suggest that the Macedonians overwhelmed the defenders in the city with the use of projectiles.[104] The prolonged nature of siege warfare once again resulted in the harsh punishment of the defending city.

Alexander earned notoriety for his harsh treatment of cities which refused to submit. After entering Thebes through the open gates, Alexander's men plundered the

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[102] *Diod. Sic.* 14.53.
[103] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.
[104] Lee (2001).

houses and then finally razed the city to the ground.[105] Diodorus cites one of the reasons for the destruction as the appeals of other representatives of the Greeks who wished to punish the Thebans for their previous betrayal of the Greeks in the Greek-Persian Wars. However, Diodorus also points out that by destroying the city after the siege, Alexander thus "presented possible rebels among the Greeks with a terrible warning."[106] Plutarch held a similar opinion of the razing, stating that "this was done, in the main, because Alexander expected that the Greeks would be terrified by so great a disaster and cower down in quiet."[107] No matter the circumstances, sieges ended in a terrible manner for the defending city if the aggressors breached its walls or somehow made it into the city. Even Athens in 404 B.C. had to settle for denigrating terms such as the removal of portions of the Long Walls and the excision of its fleet in order to keep its relative autonomy. Siege warfare and the destruction of cities are thus inextricably linked because siege warfare was usually necessary to breach the defenses of a city[108] and, once inside a city after a prolonged siege, the victors chose the harsh consequences, including the destruction of the city. It follows that city destructions increased in the fourth century under Philip and Alexander when advancements in siege warfare made it easier to bypass a city's defenses. The relation of siege warfare to city destruction therefore remained relatively constant from the sixth through the fourth century B.C.

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[105] *Diod. Sic.* 17.14.
[106] *Diod. Sic.* 17.14.
[107] *Plut. Alex,* XI.
[108] With the notable exception of cases of treachery or trickery, such as at Olynthus.

# Chapter 5: The Aftermath of City Destruction

After the aggressors destroyed a city, the fate of both city and its inhabitants remained at the whim of the victors. The city itself was either deserted, rebuilt, or taken over as a colony by the victors. Those inhabitants not killed were either sold into slavery or pardoned. In addition, the rare case of forced urban relocation by the aggressors exists in which the aggressors moved the city population to a new location.

The destruction of most cities, though not all, proved to be their nadir. Either the city was so badly destroyed that the prospect of revitalization proved fruitless and the inhabitants did not have motivation to rebuild it, or the inhabitants no longer remained to rebuild it. Olynthus serves as an example of a city which was unable to recover after its physical destruction. The archaeological evidence reveals "slingbullets and arrowheads" strewn throughout the city, both "at the walls and in the city."[109] Some of the slingbullets and arrowheads are inscribed with Philip's name or that of his generals.[110] As John Lee notes, other types of weapons artifacts likely did not show up in the excavation "because the Macedonians recovered most of them during their post-battle looting."[111] Cahill shows that the majority of slingbullets were found in houses, while one would expect them to be found in the streets or throughout the city.[112] While Cahill suggests that perhaps "defenders took to the flat areas of the house roofs and were pelted there," Lee alternatively offers the theory that slingers could have used underhanded throws within the houses.[113] He argues that this is more plausible because excavators found the

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[109] Cahill (2002) 46.
[110] Cahill (2002) 46.
[111] Lee (2001) 15.
[112] Cahill (2002) 46.
[113] Cahill (2002) 48.

slingbullets in the floor layer, not the layer above the floor, where they would presumably be found if the defenders were shot standing on the roofs.[114] Once inside the city, Philip's army engaged in engaged in urban combat with the city defenders, likely forcing them back into their homes.[115] Once they defeated the Olynthians, Philip's men razed the city. Apparently some citizens of Olynthus had departed the city even before the siege occurred, perhaps due to the impending threat of the Macedonians.[116]

Some argue that Olynthus was probably refounded due to inscriptional evidence which cites people living in Olynthus in a later period.[117] Cahill states that the city became royal property after the destruction. He cites a "recently published inscription from Cassandreia [which] records a grant of land by Lysimachus to a Macedonian, Limnaios son of Harpalos, including land 'in the Olynthus,'" which he dates to 285/4 B.C. and cites as evidence that this royal property was "dispersed by Philip and his successors to Macedonians and their loyal followers."[118] Diodorus states that in 316 B.C. Cassander "'Founded on Pallene a city called Cassandreia, after his own name, uniting with it as one city the cities of the peninsula, Potidaia, and a considerable number of the neighboring towns. He also settled in this city those of the Olynthians who survived, not a few in number.'"[119] However, after its destruction by Philip, Olynthus never regained its former stature. A debate has continued with respect to the *terminus post quem*, with scholars such as W.S. Ferguson, citing evidence such as pottery and coin proportions, arguing that Olynthus was reoccupied after 348 B.C., but the majority of scholars

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[114] Lee (2001) 16.
[115] Lee (2001) 19.
[116] Cahill (2002) 48.
[117] Hansen (2004) 835.
[118] Cahill (2002) 49.
[119] Cahill (2002) 49-50.

including Robinson argue that 348 B.C. was indeed the end of occupation.[120] Once again, literary records in conjunction with archaeology help provide a more complex picture of a city's destruction and aftermath.

Thebes suffered a similar fate after its destruction. With all of Alexander's allies calling for the destruction of Thebes for their past transgressions, Alexander razed the city entirely to the ground. The end of Thebes' glory likely came about not only from the physical destruction but the capture of 30,000 inhabitants, the selling off of the captives, and the general proclamations against Thebans, such as calling for "no Greek to offer shelter to a Theban."[121] Thus, the physical destruction and extraneous penalties enacted against Thebans resulted in the abrupt demise of Thebes as a key player in Greece.

However, the physical destruction of a city did not necessarily constitute its death sentence. A few city dwellers survived not only to rebuild their cities but also to revitalize them. In some cases, such a feat became possible due to less physical damage and less severe penalties inflicted on the inhabitants, which preserved the resources and man power necessary to rebuild and revitalize the city. For instance, even though the Persians destroyed Miletos in 494 B.C., it still managed to regain its former power. According to Hansen and Nielsen, "the physical destruction of Miletos [...] appears to have been almost total. Archaeologically, continuity at the site in [the First Half of the Fifth Century] cannot be proved or disproved."[122] With respect to the destruction in 494 B.C., Kern notes that the Persians destroyed Miletos' port, which "was never rebuilt" and

[120] Cahill (2002) 51.
[121] *Diod. Sic.* 17.14.
[122] Hansen (2004) 1085.

he argues that "Miletus never regained its former glory."[123] According to Herodotus, the Persians kept some part of the territory and gave the other part to the Carians.[124] While it might not have reached its former glory, Miletos did rebuild in 479, fifteen years after the city's initial destruction.[125] The Persians themselves took over occupation of the city and managed to control this city until 334 B.C. when Alexander ended their stay with his siege engines. Miletos thus serves as an example of a city which came back from the dead to lead a second life.

Samos was another prominent zombie city, one which was destroyed but then came back to life. After the Persians killed all the inhabitants in 515 B.C., the city lacked any life. However, Otanes, the general who had led the fight against the Samians, "helped to resettle the island because of a dream he had and a disease which attacked his genitals."[126] While Herodotus thus purports the reason for resettling the island as due to a dream, other reasons such as its rich resources and opportunity for establishing a Persian colony. Samos therefore came back to life when the conquerors decided to repopulate the destroyed city, which was the same situation for Miletos. Otanes probably decided to revive the city in order to reap the economic benefits of the revived city. Samos' renewed strength is evident by its participation in the Greek-Persian Wars, where they fought first on the Persian side and then on the Greek side. Even their inevitably failed attempt to repel the Athenians, as described in the introduction, demonstrates that Samos regained its former strength and remained a key player in the political and economic relations of the Greek world. The fact the aggressors left these cities completely

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[123] Kern (1999) 79.
[124] *Hdt.* 6.20.
[125] Hansen (2004) 1084.
[126] *Hdt.* 3.149.

decimated with respect to both buildings and inhabitants demonstrates how amazing their recoveries were. Willingness to rebuild or repopulate on the part of those who destroyed the cities might be the key factor which allowed these ghost cities to spring back to life and reassert their influence on the Greek world.

While Herodotus does not give a detailed description of the destruction of Athens by the Persians in 480 B.C., the archaeological evidence confirms Herodotus' account as well as Thucydides' account of the aftermath. The extensive ongoing excavations at the Agora in Athens have provided copious evidence of the Persian destruction. First, the archaeology confirms both the date and extent of the destruction. In addition to evidence of damaged buildings, archaeologists examined twenty-one well deposits, which rendered similar findings. The wells had been intentionally sealed in a way that required human agency.[127] Within these wells, the excavators found pottery sherds which they dated to the first two decades of the Fifth Century B.C. They dated these sherds by comparing them in a pottery sequence based on a date absolutely established, specifically 490 B.C. when the Battle of Marathon occurred. Those erecting the mound over the Marathon warriors included pottery, which means that the pottery in the mound must be dated before 490 B.C. Shear and others have noted extensive similarities between the pottery found in the mound at Marathon and that found in the twenty-one well deposits in Athens. Both groups of pottery are classified under the broader "Class of Athens 581" with pottery in both grounds being attributed to "The Haimon Painter."[128] However, the pottery found in the well deposits is identified as slightly later based on its style and design, dating it right around 480 B.C. when the Persians are said to have destroyed

[127] Shear (1993) 403-4.
[128] Shear (1993) 410.

Athens. Pottery sherds found in plundered wall trenches, especially for the Athenian Bouleuterion and "Building F," corroborate the date given to the pottery found in the well deposits, which links all these deposits to a widespread destruction.[129]

Aside from the dating of pottery, one can link ostraka to the same destruction in 480 B.C. Excavators found 36 ostraka in eight deposits, but the law of ostracism did not come into use until 487 B.C.[130] Thus, in this case we have a *terminus post quem* of 487 B.C., which means that the destruction had to have occurred after this date. As far as what the Persians destroyed, the evidence shows that they destroyed buildings, including private homes and shops as well as public buildings in all directions around the Panathenaic Way.[131] The evidence consists "broken roof tiles, mud bricks, and field stones" which are all "recognizable pieces of stone architecture" found in the well deposits.[132] In some instances, the Persians did relatively minor damage to a building, in which case the inhabitants could later fix or rebuild parts of it. For example, the Stoa Basileos suffered damage as evidenced by pieces of it found in the Persian destruction pits. Shear argues that the roof of the Stoa Basileos collapsed because when it was rebuilt after the wars, the builders made extensive changes to the arrangement of the roof supports, almost impossible unless the roof had completely collapsed beforehand.[133] At other parts of the Agora, builders during the Classical Period rebuilt houses over spots where Archaic houses had been, in at least three cases building over the Archaic wells. Thus, they were "making little or no use of pre-exisiting walls, foundations, or building

[129] Shear (1993) 425-426.
[130] Shear (1993) 412.
[131] Shear (1993) 404.
[132] Shear (1993) 401.
[133] Shear (1993) 428.

materials, as if they set their new structures upon a *tabula rasa* from which the Archaic predecessors had been quite literally swept away."[134] If Shear is correct in this conclusion, then the Persians completely leveled some houses to the extent that they rendered them unrecognizable.

Once the Persians had left the Athenian territory, the Athenians returned to their city to find that "only isolated portions of the circumference had been left standing, and most of the houses were in ruin; though a few remained, in which the Persian grandees had taken up their quarters."[135] In attempting to make the security secure as quickly as possible, Themistocles urged the Athenians to immediately rebuild the walls, which the whole population engaged in, "sparing no edifice, private or public, which might be of any use in their work, but throwing it all down."[136] They worked rapidly and finished quickly, with the building showing "signs of the haste of its execution" and the use of multiple stones, especially in the walls.[137] The gathering of stones from broken buildings for reuse and discarding of others is what "created the dumped wills of smashed pottery and broken-up building materials in so many Agora deposits."[138] The haste with which the Athenians executed their building after the destruction thus clearly shows in the archaeological record. It is certainly not clear who filled the wells, whether it was the inhabitants or the Persians, but the Persians had done so against other Greek cities such as at Plataia.[139] While Athens suffered extensive physical damage at the hands of the Persians, the fact that the majority of the inhabitants had fled to safety prior to the

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[134] Shear (1993) 406.
[135] *Thuc.* 1.89.
[136] *Thuc.* 1.90.
[137] *Thuc.* 1.93.
[138] Shear (1993) 417.
[139] *Hdt.* 9.49; Shear (1993) 417.

Persians entering the city meant that the rebuilding process could occur and much more quickly.

The extent of physical destruction played a key role in the ability of cities to recover. The cases of Miletos and Samos prove especially noteworthy because of their ability to recover from total destruction and removal of population, respectively. When the city suffered less physical destruction to the city, especially in cases where only a few buildings were destroyed, it usually recovered soon thereafter. For instance, although the Persians plundered the sanctuary of Athens and burned the acropolis, the city recovered soon thereafter, even using the remnants from the Persian destruction in their new buildings. By doing so, they always kept the reminder of the offense in the front of their minds. After rebuilding, Athens continued to be the leader of the Greek world along with Sparta and remained so until defeated by the Spartans in 404 B.C. at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War. Sparta did not destroy Athens, but it severely weakened its power through the terms of surrender, which included the surrender of its fleet and the requirement to remove the Long Walls.[140] Afterward, Athens found itself struggling to yield its own autonomy under Macedonian influence.

The aggressors had several options when deciding what to do with the destroyed city's inhabitants. Often the aggressors killed a certain number of the male defenders, especially after a long, drawn out siege. They then took males, females and children as slaves, often attempting to sell them. If a population remained in the city when it was destroyed, the aggressors rarely let the inhabitants remain unpunished in some way. Lastly, there is the uncommon case of a forced urban relocation by the aggressors of the

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[140] *Xen. Hell.* 2.2.22-23.

city population.

After the Persians had reduced Miletos, they killed most of the men and the "women and children became their captive slaves."[141] Such an outcome represents the norm of what happened to the inhabitants of a destroyed city. Alexander followed almost the same prescription when he besieged the Persians at Miletos in 334 B.C. After knocking down the walls and entering the city, he killed some of the inhabitants and then sold the rest as slaves.[142] The consequences were especially dire for the inhabitants of Thebes when Alexander razed it to the ground in 335 B.C. Initially attempting to engage Alexander's forces did not work well as the Thebans attempted to retreat inside their own walls. Alexander's forces killed over three thousand Thebans and captured over thirty thousand.[143] The sheer numbers demonstrate how effective and ruthless Alexander and his army were. While details are relatively scarce with respect to the destruction of Olynthus by Philip in 348 B.C., Diodorus states that after enslaving the inhabitants, Philip and his forces "sold both men and property as booty."[144]

At Athens, the Athenian population had fled the city prior to the arrival of the Persians, except for the few that decided to stay behind and hole themselves up on the acropolis.[145] After the Persians bypassed the makeshift barricades, they killed those Athenians who did not kill themselves by jumping off the wall, even those who sought refuge in the temple.[146] Lastly, at Samos the Persians enacted harsh vengeance on the Samians for what they felt was a betrayal of an agreement they had made to avoid

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[141] *Hdt.* 6.19
[142] *Diod. Sic.* 17.22.
[143] *Diod. Sic.* 17.13.
[144] *Diod. Sic.* 16.53.
[145] *Hdt.* 8.51.
[146] *Hdt.* 8.53.

hostilities.[147] The Persians killed all the inhabitants in their anger and they "swept it clean as with a net and then handed it over to Syloson both ruined and devoid of inhabitants."[148] Herodotus describes netting in another passage as follows: "each man takes hold of another man's hand until they form a line stretching from the sea on the North to the sea on the South, and they then go through the entire island hunting out the people."[149] The extent of the penalties which the aggressors inflict on the inhabitants is clearly influenced by the circumstances under which they destroyed the city. The Persians massacred the Samians in a rage at a violation of an agreement, although they had come into Samos with orders "not to kill any Samian nor to enslave anyone."[150] However, the killing of a whole population was a rare occurrence. Instead, it is evident from these examples that capture and slavery is the most common form of punishment for the inhabitants of a destroyed city.

The forced relocation of a population to another location by the aggressors occurred rather infrequently within the context of the Greek world. However, such a practice was relatively common in Persia and other Near Eastern empires. The Assyrians especially made use of forced relocation. They captured and deported many populations in Egypt and Asia Minor during their military expeditions in the regions. According to Assyrian inscriptional evidence, 4.5 million people were deported from their homes in the period 750-620 B.C. throughout Western Asia.[151] The practice also found use in the Western Greek world in Sicily. Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, frequently moved the

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[147] *Hdt.* 3.146.
[148] *Hdt.* 3.149.
[149] *Hdt.* 6.31.
[150] *Hdt.* 3.147
[151] Farrokh (2007) 25.

population of a city which he destroyed to Syracuse or, in some cases, a different location. While fighting the Italian Greeks, Dionysius destroyed the city of Caulonia. Diodorus Siculus describes how "the inhabitants of this city [Dionysius] transplanted to Syracuse, gave them citizenship. And allowed them the exemption from taxes for five years; he then leveled the city to the ground and gave the territory of the Carloniates to the Locrians.[152]

The Persian destruction of Miletos serves as another example this rather uncommon practice among the Greeks. Instead of simply taking the Milesians as slaves and selling them, the Persians captured them and then settled them at Ampe along the Erythraean Sea.[153] Herodotus does not explain the purpose of this resettlement, although he does mention that the Persians took over the territory from which they removed the Milesians. This example of forced urban relocation is uncommon within the context of city destruction because most instances of urban relocation occur when a city voluntarily relocates itself, usually as a defensive maneuver against aggressive imperial powers.[154] Miletos thus offers a variance to the general trend with respect to city destruction and conquered populations.

The aftermath of a city's destruction was usually calamitous for both the city and its inhabitants, though the degree of destruction and pain varied from city to city depending on the circumstances of the destruction. Slavery and a number of deaths served as the norm for the inhabitants of a destroyed city. Total destructions and mass killing of populations usually held dim prospects for the future of such a city. However,

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[152] *Diod. Sic.* 14.90.
[153] *Hdt.* 6.20.
[154] Demand (1990) 6.

even cities such as these sometimes overcame the difficulties, rebuilding and revitalizing themselves. Zombie cities like Miletos and Samos seemed out of the picture but were able to bring themselves back to life again even after their calamities due partly to the efforts of the conquerors to restore them. Lastly, the ultimate authority of the conquerors of a destroyed city lends them creative options, such as the forced relocation of a city population to another location.

## Chapter Six: Why Athens Was Not Destroyed in 404 B.C.

A closer examination of Athens in 404 B.C is necessary because it clearly provides an example of a city that was not destroyed, but easily could have been. As Anton Powell notes, the ancient sources are rather limiting in ascribing justification for not destroying Athens.[155] Both Xenophon and Plutarch mention that the Spartan allies wanted to raze Athens to the ground, while Plutarch mentions that Lysander himself desired to enslave the city. However, Xenophon states that the destruction longed for by the Corinthians and Thebans did not occur because the Spartans "said that they would not enslave a Greek city which had done great service amid the great perils that had befallen Greece."[156] Plutarch tells the account in much the same way, but he focuses on how after the Athenians refused Lysander's imposition of his own form of government, Lysander wished to enslave the Athenians and "Erianthus the Theban also made a motion that the city be razed to the ground and the country about it left to graze sheep."[157] But afterwards, according to Plutarch, a poet sang a chorus of Euripides during a banquet, after which "all were moved to compassion and felt it to be a cruel deed to abolish and destroy a city which was so famous, and produced such poets."[158] Each of these explanations seems too naive and vague concerning any other more practical reasons why Sparta did not destroy Athens.

Perhaps Sparta did not destroy Athens in order to keep a buffer between themselves and the increasing power of Thebes. Paul Cartledge subscribes to this theory and refers to the relationship between Athens, Sparta, and Thebes as the "Fateful

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[155] Powell (2006) 287-288.
[156] *Xen. Hell* 2.2.20.
[157] *Plut. Lys.* 15.1-2.
[158] *Plut. Lys.* 15.3.

Triangle." He argues that "it was in the interests of each to keep the other two at each other's throats or at least sufficiently preoccupied with each other to allow space and time for the third party to pursue its own hegemonial ambitions."[159] By keeping Athens alive, although weakened and at its mercy, Sparta would be able to check the power of Thebes and secure itself an important ally. Sparta did not want Thebes stepping into the power vacuum left by a destroyed Athens, potentially disrupting their communications in the Peloponnesus or its allies with the Peloponnesian League.[160] Besides arguing that the Spartans sought to maintain the triangular relationship, Cartledge asserts that the Lysander did not destroy Athens because he wanted to rule it through his proxies, specifically the Thirty Tyrants.[161] Donald Kagan agrees with these arguments and points to the threat of Thebes as the main reason why Sparta did not destroy Athens.[162] However, such an argument is less convincing than the triangle argument because of the evidence we have that Lysander strongly desired to destroy Athens.

On the other hand, Sparta might have worried that Athens would join with Thebes in an alliance, which would greatly threaten Sparta. Historians such as Cartledge and Kagan might place too much weight on hindsight, noting the fact that Thebes would continue to grow in power and eventually destroy Sparta. Powell argues that Sparta could not have known about these future circumstances.[163] Athens had been the threat over the past decades and so Athens was likely the most pressing concern. Why not destroy their great rival while they had the chance? Yet, Sparta chose neither to destroy

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[159] Cartledge (1987) 274.
[160] Cartledge (1987) 276.
[161] Cartledge (1987) 275.
[162] Kagan (2003) 478-483.
[163] Powell (2006) 294.

the city nor to even enslave a part of the population or seek out treasure in the city. The possibility of religious restraint is intriguing, but the evidence for such is scant. Powell notes that Plutarch likely would have mentioned a Delphic oracle concerning the fate of Athens in 404 B.C.[164] What the decision might have ultimately rested on was Lysander and the financial nature of the Spartan system.

Sparta may have decided not to destroy Athens because it feared the person of Lysander and the corruption of society through the importation of money. Powell proposes this idea, arguing that many Spartans felt that the city was threatened by a possible sudden influx of money, which would surely come from the destruction of Athens.[165] They feared the problems that excess money, especially in private hands, would cause to the fabric of the constitution and by extension Spartan society as a whole. Perhaps Lysander would use the money to bribe the ephors and thus seize power for himself, or at the very least create divisive factions in society.[166] In this sense, Powell argues that the people of Sparta would want the opposite of what Lysander desired. Thus, "[such] was the fear of him in Sparta that his wishes *for* destruction would have been, for many Spartans, a strong argument *against* destruction."[167] Sparta did not wish to have the wealth available at Athens, perhaps thinking that in sparing Athens they were sparing their own city from the ruin which a massive influx of wealth would bring about.

It does not seem necessary that only one of these arguments be valid. The Spartans could have taken multiple of these reasons into account when deciding not to destroy Athens. They obviously made an informed decision before they sent back the

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[164] Powell (2006) 296.
[165] Powell (2006) 297.
[166] Powell (2006) 298.
[167] Powell (2006) 300.

messengers to Athens, one seemingly contrary to the desires of Lysander, whose intention to destroy Athens may have shown through in his decision to free the cities of Plataia and Aigospomati before advancing on Athens. He may have done so in order to justify future harsh treatment of Athens.[168] The financial concern, fear of Lysander, fear of Thebes, and perhaps even a desire to keep intact a city which had played such a vital part in protecting Greece from the Persians and to preserve its cultural value all played a role in the decision of Sparta to not destroy Athens at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War. The fact that Sparta had so many potential reasons not to destroy Athens, even while Lysander and their allies urged them to raze the city to the ground, makes the fact that Sparta did not destroy the city much less surprising.

The destruction of Thebes in 335 B.C. by Alexander provides an excellent contrast which helps explain why Thebes was destroyed and Athens was not. The element of gratefulness for Athens' role in fighting the Persians clearly did not exist in the case of Thebes. Diodorus Siculus makes it clear that one of the justifications used by the men arguing for the razing of the city to the ground was the fact that Thebans had sided with the Persians instead of the Greeks. Such treachery "so aroused the feelings of the council against the Thebans that it was finally voted to raze the city, to sell the captives, to outlaw the Theban exiles from all Greece, and to allow no Greek to offer shelter to a Theban."[169] The two examples are similar in that the allies of the main power urged for the destruction of the city, but those at Sparta did not have their way.

The contexts of the two conflicts differed in that Thebes had revolted against the power of Macedon, while Athens and Sparta were each imperial powers that were

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[168] Powell (2006) 294.
[169] *Diod. Sic.* 17.14.

fighting against each other in a drawn-out war. In the cases of city destruction examined, it is not too often that one comes across two imperial powers involved. However, Thebes was anything but weak at this point. In deciding to destroy Thebes, Alexander had to take into account the potential threat that it would continue to pose to his power if he did not harshly punish it. He also had to consider the precedent and example he was setting for all other cities in his empire which might contemplate rebellion. He also feared that Thebes might join with Athens and Sparta to challenge his power.[170] The two cases also differ in that whereas Alexander had to authority to make the final decision, of course with the recommendations of his generals and allies, Lysander could not make the final decision, or he probably would have destroyed Athens. Instead, the decision rested with the ephors at Sparta. Lastly, Alexander did not face the same financial issues that the Spartans dealt with when making their decision. Conversely, he allowed his soldiers to freely plunder the houses and even the temples.[171] Arrian actually compared the cases of Athens and Thebes, noting that Athens "received no other humiliation than the demolition of the Long Walls, the surrender of most of her ships, and the loss of supremacy."[172] The differences in the nature of these conflicts as well as the societal structures and ideologies influenced the different outcomes in Athens and Thebes. Athens survived only because the Spartans had multiple reasons not to destroy them. If the Spartans felt compelled to, they could have easily destroyed the entire city or at least enslaved a portion of the population, but their specific circumstances caused them to refrain from destroying Athens.

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[170] *Diod. Sic.* 17.8.
[171] *Diod. Sic.* 17.13.
[172] *Arr. Anab.*1.9.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

The rise and motives of imperial powers as well as the increasing sophistication in the implementation of siege warfare greatly impacted the Greek world in the Archaic and Classics Periods. These factors clearly influenced the destruction of cities, especially in the Classical Period, as Philip and Alexander revolutionized siege warfare while vastly expanding the Macedonian Empire. The destruction of cities in the Greek world thus illuminates to a broader extent the power relations in the region across this span of time. We first saw Persia as a great imperial power exerting its influence from the East already in the Archaic Period, followed by the rise of Athens and Sparta as imperial powers in the Fifth Century B.C. Macedonia then became the central imperial power in the region during the Fourth Century B.C.

What we have clearly seen is a vastly unbalanced proportion linking Greek cities and city destruction. The vast majority of city-states in the Greek world, although indeed able to play active roles, inevitably fell prey to the power games of the few imperial powers. Whether compelled to enroll in alliances, such as the Athenian-run Delian League, or constantly under attack and facing the threat of destruction, the less powerful cities often fell under the yoke of the stronger ones. Even cities strong in their own regions usually proved no match against a power such as Macedon. It was for this reason that some of the weaker cities attempted to work together to check the power of the stronger ones. Even after their previous hostilities, Athens and Sparta worked together in the Fourth Century B.C. while trying to reassert their sovereignty in the wake of Macedonian expansion and interference in their affairs. The power relations could quickly shift in a matter of years or decades, as exemplified by these constant threats

which the formerly powerful cities of Athenians and Spartans suffered under Philip and Alexander. This study in the destruction of cities therefore exists within the context of these power relations while also helping to explain how and why the interaction among these cities changed over time.

Another aim in this study is to show how the increase in city destructions over time demonstrates a broader connection with siege warfare and thus a general change in the conduct and technology of warfare in the Greek world from the Archaic until the Classical Period. We have seen how the first fundamental change occurred when the Greek cities borrowed and adapted the siege techniques and technology of the Persian Empire, which they in turn had borrowed from others including the Assyrians. The Macedonians under Philip and Alexander then made significant advancements in siege strategy and especially technology. Philip and Alexander made these improvements at the same time as they revolutionized their army, which explains why they were so effective both in defeating armies in battles as well as besieging cities. The rise in the destruction of cities in the Greek world is inevitably a consequence of these broader changes in the nature of warfare as imperial powers acquired the ability to more easily bypass a city's defenses.

The destruction of cities did not only involve physical structures and land. Whenever an aggressor destroyed all or part of a city, it had to decide what to do with the people remaining in the city. The aggressor could leave them be, impose penalties on them such as tribute, enslave them, or kill them. When one killed off a whole population, such could also be considered city destruction, as some considered the people itself to constitute a city, not necessarily the structures or territorial boundaries. The threat of

warfare remained a constant threat in the lives of Greeks at this time, as is evidenced by people leaving cities to flee to safety in anticipation of an attack or other danger. Demand actually describes this as one of the principal causes for urban relocation.[173] We have also seen how the aggressors could relocate an entire population, which was a much more common practice in the Near East among the Persians and other Eastern powers as well as in Sicily and Italy under Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse. The destruction of cities thus played a crucial role in affecting population demographics and the personal experience of Greeks during the Archaic and Classical periods.

The trends established in the Archaic and Classical periods continued into the Third Century B.C. with the rise of new imperial powers. Demetrius Poliorcetes, nicknamed "The Besieger," continued developing the strategies of siege warfare in the Hellenistic Period as the King of Macedon. The development of new siege equipment expanded especially under Demetrius.[174] Consequently, the destruction of cities still rivaled that of the late Classical Period under Philip and Alexander. However, at the same time, defenders made advances in defensive strategies and technologies, improving the fortifications of cities. Thus, the siege of a city still did not necessarily mean success, as sufficient fortification in conjunction with anti-siege devices, such as catapults, increased the ability of defenders to successfully outlast a siege. Even Demetrius proved unable to overcome the defenses of Rhodes. After besieging it for a year, he felt compelled to agree to terms unfavorable to the Macedonians. As Kern aptly notes, Demetrius' "failure showed that it was still impossible to take a well-defended city without isolating it from the outside world. [...] Demetrius tried to overcome these

[173] Demand (1990).
[174] Kern (1999) 237.

weaknesses by building ever-larger siege engines, but their giganticism proved vain in the end."[175] After this point, siege technology did not advance much until the invention of gunpowder. Instead, "diplomacy, betrayal, and blockade remained fundamental to success in siege warfare."[176]

The destruction of cities, although a relatively rare occurrence in the Greek world, played a vital role in the numerous changes with respect to power relations and the nature of warfare. As such, this study has aimed to contribute to the scholarly conversation in these fields of Greek History, while at the same time attempting to provide a comprehensive answer to the question of why cities were destroyed in the Greek world.

[175] Kern (1999) 247.
[176] Kern (1999) 248.

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