

ASTYPOCHUS, SPARTA'S INCOMPETENT NAVARCH?

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CLOSE TO THE END OF 412, the Spartans' first naval campaigning season in the east, eleven Spartan *symboloi* were sent to Ionia to take charge of the war in Ionia and to decide on the level of support needed for Sparta's interests in the Hellespont (Thuc. 8.39.2–4).¹ According to Thucydides, their mandate also included replacing the current navarch, Astyochus, if they so decided, as he was under suspicion at home. Pedaritus, the Spartan commander at Chios, had sent letters to Sparta accusing him of not responding to his urgent requests for assistance.

The charge of inaction against Astyochus suggests that he may have been little different from those other Spartan naval commanders in the Archidamian War, whom Thucydides portrays as stereotypically timid, inept, and liable to panic (2.80–94; 3.29–33).² The unfavourable impression is further emphasised by the fact that Thucydides frequently depicts Astyochus in conflict with other personalities in Ionia, thus hinting that this navarch was also difficult. Modern assessments have, in general, agreed with Thucydides' implications, and opinions of Astyochus have ranged from hostile to dismissive. He has been thought venal and capable of treason and murder.³ More generous summaries have claimed that he was merely negligible and ineffective.⁴ Among the few who have attempted a close analysis of his motives and actions, the general conclusion is that he lacked competence, initiative, talent, and diplomacy, although they allow that he was occasionally successful.⁵ In short, the consensus is that the Spartans were right to investigate their navarch's poor record and to give serious thought to replacing him. This paper argues that Astyochus has been unfairly stereotyped and that, given the circumstances of Sparta's foray into Ionian affairs, he performed well.

I

Although Thucydides may have over-emphasised the confidence of the rest of the Greeks in the Athenians' weakness after their defeat in Sicily in 413 in order to dramatise their comeback, Sparta's early actions and decisions in that year

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¹ In late December 412, as suggested by Andrewes and Dover (1981: 84).

² All subsequent textual references are to Thucydides, unless otherwise indicated.

³ Grote 1855: 401; Hatzfeld 1951: 305; Van de Maele 1971: 42–44.

⁴ Negligible: Beloch 1927 [1912]: 390; ineffective: Meyer 1956: 306.

⁵ Westlake 1956: 102–103, 1968: 19–33; Andrewes and Dover 1981: 75; Kagan 1987: 84, 129, 299.

suggest that its and the expectations of the Greeks were real.⁶ The knowledge that an Athenian fleet could be so roundly defeated and the recognition of the military and economic effects of a serious naval loss on the Athenians made their opponents suppose that only a little more effort would finish them altogether. Thus, in the winter of 413/2 the Spartans ordered their allies to contribute vessels for a fleet to be used to exploit the situation (8.3.2).

The Athenians responded by building more ships and by keeping a close eye on their allies in the Aegean (8.4.1). These precautions did not prevent secret offers of rebellion reaching Sparta from important areas, such as Euboea, Chios, and Lesbos. Some of these offers involved association with the Persians: Tissaphernes, the satrap in Ionia, supported the rebel oligarchs on Chios, and Pharnabazus, satrap in the Hellespont, sent as his representatives two Greek exiles, who brought Persian money to Sparta to equip a naval force (8.5.1–5, 6.1, 8.1).⁷ The Spartans seem to have favoured Chios and appointed a navarch for an expedition there. Presumably, they assumed that it would take only a show of force and support to win over a significant proportion of Athens' allies in the east (8.2.1–2). At any rate, they appear to have made only a perfunctory effort at reconnaissance on Chios (8.6.4).⁸

In the following spring, however, the Spartans sent only a small advance force to explore the possibilities for revolt on Chios, Lesbos, and the Hellespont (8.8.2). Thucydides explains that an earthquake during the winter had caused them to change their minds about sending the earlier force under a navarch (8.6.5).⁹ Instead, they despatched twenty-one ships under a different commander. The Athenians blockaded these vessels in the Saronic Gulf, and the Spartan commanding officer was killed in an ensuing skirmish (8.10.2–4).

The Spartans then sent Chalcideus and Alcibiades, their Athenian informer, with five ships from Sparta to Chios where they quickly ensured a coup in Sparta's favour. They then moved to the mainland opposite, reaching as far south as Miletus, and encouraging disaffection against Athens (8.14.1–3, 17.1–3). The acquisition of Chios, a prosperous naval ally of Athens, and of Miletus, a well-known and important port, must have been a tremendous boost to Sparta's expectation of fast, effective, widespread, and relatively effortless revolt against Athens.¹⁰ While at Miletus, Chalcideus also established a basis for Spartan co-operation with the Persians through discussions with the satrap Tissaphernes.

⁶ See his comments about the plans for revolt in Euboea, Lesbos, and Chios (8.5.1–4), the general reaction in Greece (8.2.1–2, 24.5), and the enthusiasm of the western allies (8.26.1).

⁷ Some of the ships used by the *sympoulai* were funded by this money; they may have been intended from the start for service in the Hellespont (8.6.1, 8.1, 39.1).

⁸ Their intelligence seems to have consisted of a single report on the size of the Chian fleet and the Chians' willingness to rebel (8.6.4).

⁹ Spartan attention to such phenomena as earthquakes is well attested (e.g., 3.89.1–2). What happened to the earlier navarch, Melanchridas, is unknown.

¹⁰ For Alcibiades' influence in Ionia, see Plut. *Alc.* 12.1 and Andoc. 4.30. The fame of Miletus is mentioned by Herodotus (6.106), and discussed by Andrewes and Dover (1981: 40). It was close to a

Their arrangement officially acknowledged Persia as Sparta's ally in Asia Minor (8.18.1–3).¹¹ It is not clear whether diplomatic negotiations were part of his mandate or whether Chalcideus found himself urged into the agreement by the Persians.

Spartan momentum was soon checked, however, and its Ionian strategy challenged when a small Athenian force blockaded Miletus, and when communications between Miletus and Chios were threatened by the presence of Athenian ships at Samos, which lay between the two areas of Spartan interest (8.19.3, 21).

II

Sparta had by this time appointed another navarch, Astyochus, and sent him to Chios with four ships.¹² He arrived in advance of the main fleet to act as temporary commander for the island and to further the campaign against Lesbos (8.23.1). The presence of a Spartan officer was meant to emphasise continued Spartan leadership and support for the area.¹³ Despite the assistance of armed Peloponnesian crewmen deliberately left behind by Chalcideus (8.17.1), the Chians may have supposed that the focus of Sparta's attention had now moved to the mainland further south, while they bore the brunt of spreading revolt on Lesbos and to the north (8.17.1, 22).

From Chios Astyochus quickly tried to further the Spartan cause on Lesbos, where some of the Chians had already tried to promote rebellion (8.23.2–5). He was unable to prevent the Athenians re-establishing control of the island, however, and he returned to Chios where he dismissed the land forces that had assembled for the campaign intended to follow the fall of Lesbos to Sparta. The Chians' earlier action on Lesbos seems to have been precipitate, and the Athenians' swift response unexpected. The situation now became critical, since Athens' success on Lesbos encouraged pro-Athenian elements on Chios to plot against the supporters of Sparta,¹⁴ and the Athenians themselves attacked the island. Nonetheless, Astyochus and his Chian supporters successfully dealt with internal security by taking hostages from among the plotters (8.24.2, 24.6, 31.1). The navarch also made contact with the local Persian commander on the mainland

supply of good timber for shipbuilding and repair (Dewdney 1971: fig. 35). The loss of the city also endangered the position of Amorges, whom the Athenians supported (Andrewes and Dover 1981: 70). When the Athenians launched a counter-attack later, it was in the expectation that once Miletus fell they would regain all the other defecting cities (8.25.5).

¹¹This treaty seems to have been a regulation of their association. Its status and that of Sparta's subsequent agreements with Persia are clarified by Lewis (1977: 90–108).

¹²Interest in Astyochus' arrival in Ionia is usually confined to its relevance to the duration of the Spartan navarchy. For discussions on the timing of these appointments during the Peloponnesian War, see Beloch 1879; Pareti 1917: 1–131; Sealey 1976.

¹³This was especially important if the Spartans were aware of Athens' naval preparations at Piraeus (8.15).

¹⁴Chios was not completely secure for Sparta; it had come over only when Spartan ships appeared in its harbour (8.14.1–2).

nearby; they were to act in concert that winter in an attempt on Clazomenae (8.31.2). Astyochus, then, attempted to secure a larger area of support for Sparta, and established working relations with the Persian forces in the area (8.23.2–5, 31.2–3). Criticism for the failure of the campaign is directed not so much at the navarch but at Sparta for its slowness in responding quickly and strongly enough to the situation.¹⁵

Neither Astyochus' actions nor the agreement already established with the Spartans prevented the Persians carrying out operations apparently independently of their new ally. These included Tissaphernes' destruction of the walls of Teos (8.20.2), his installation of a garrison at Iasus (8.29.1), and, perhaps, the organisation of a coup at Cnidus (8.35.1). Sparta's association with an ally on whom it depended for money but whose methods and aims differed from its own was to be a serious complication.

When the main Spartan fleet arrived in the east, it occupied Miletus without challenge from the Athenians, who retired to Samos (8.27.4–6). This fleet was commanded by Therimenes and brought with it Pedaritus and Philippus as commanders for Chios and Miletus, respectively. The precise duties of these men and their relationship of their office to the navarch are not explained. The fleet then helped Tissaphernes to defeat the Persian rebel Amorges, who was backed by the Athenians (8.28.2–5).¹⁶ Therimenes also concluded a new agreement with the satrap in order to replace the earlier one that had been rejected at Sparta (8.36.2, 37.1–5).

While Astyochus was making further attacks on mainland sites near Chios in co-operation with the Persians (8.31.1–4), he was asked by some rebels on Lesbos to support renewed action against Athens. His decision to do so seems to have pitted him against some of his allies as well as the recently arrived Pedaritus. When Astyochus put his proposal before the allies, they refused to run the risk of what they feared would be another failure (8.32.1–3). Thucydides identifies the Corinthians and the Chians among these reluctant allies. Either group may have given him information on the incident; perhaps they were anxious to explain their lack of support for the scheme by implying that the blame lay with the navarch.¹⁷

Pedaritus refused outright to allow Astyochus to use any Chian ships for the proposed operation. It seems odd that Astyochus was unable to convince his fellow Spartan to agree to another attempt to expand Spartan influence to Lesbos. The differences between the two officers are usually explained as a clash

¹⁵ Kagan 1987: 58.

¹⁶ The action at Iasus resulted in money for the Peloponnesian fleet and easier access to the Dorian hexapolis and the nearby islands. The hexapolis included Cnidus, Cos, Camirus, Ialysus, and Lindus (Hdt. 1.144). Dorian Sparta had traditional ties here that it might have expected to exploit in wartime.

¹⁷ This was not the only time that Sparta's allies refused to cooperate in the Peloponnesian War: in 428 they did not turn up for a combined assault on Athens to which they had previously agreed (3.15). In addition, Quinn (1981: *passim*) notes a general lack of co-operation against Athens by its island allies.

of personality and status, or as the result of political rivalries at home.¹⁸ Perhaps they were incompatible; Pedaritus belonged to an influential Spartan family,¹⁹ and may well have acted as though he had the greater authority and prestige. If, however, the situation was the result of political differences at Sparta, it is difficult to imagine that Pedaritus represented an opposition that would deliberately try to sabotage Sparta's war efforts by encouraging open confrontation between two of its commanders abroad. Kagan rightly pointed out that no such situation between Spartan officers had arisen before, but he attributed the impasse between them to Pedaritus' greater influence at Sparta, which Astyochus "failed to challenge" (1987: 79, note 42). He does not explain how Astyochus might have done so without compromising his own or Sparta's authority in the east.

If the navarch was in supreme command of Spartan and allied naval forces abroad at this time, it seems strange that a junior officer would or could refuse to co-operate with his superior, particularly as both were products of a system that emphasised obedience (Xen. *Lac.* 2). Pedaritus, then, not the navarch, was guilty of damaging Sparta's interests through insubordinate behaviour. If, however, the navarchy in 412 was an office of less authority than it became by the time of Lysander and Callicratidas (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.1–15), then the fault lay with the current organisation of command, which was clearly not suited to this type of distant warfare. Pedaritus' decision indicates that he considered that he was now in charge of the Chians' ships and the incident suggests that the navarch's area of responsibility vis-à-vis that of other Spartan commanders was not yet clearly defined. Astyochus' position was made even more difficult if the Spartan government was now making *ad hoc* appointments to solve local administrative problems without clarifying the relationship of the appointee to the navarch.

With the advantage of hindsight it is clear that with two areas of interest in Ionia to control Sparta needed a supreme authority on the spot as rapid decisions might be called for without the delay of referral to the government at home or the risk of disagreement among officers in the field. Astyochus' frustration with Pedaritus and the Chians may have been due, at least in some part, to his recognition that the situation demanded an executive authority in Ionia to take quick advantage of opportunities like that presented on Lesbos.

Thucydides does not provide sufficient detail for us to solve satisfactorily the problems raised by his account, to calculate Astyochus' chances of success on Lesbos, or to assess the validity of the allies' opinion of the navarch's proposed campaign. He does imply, at least, that Astyochus thought he was trying to implement Spartan strategy as best he could. He reports that in his proposal to Pedaritus and the Chians Astyochus said he wanted either to increase Sparta's allies in the east, or to do some damage to the enemy (8.32.3). Andrewes and Dover (1981: 75) praise Astyochus for what they call his "unexpected enterprise"

¹⁸ Busolt 1904: 1469; Westlake 1956; Van de Maele 1971: 39; Kagan 1987: 79.

¹⁹ Poralla 1985: 104.

over Lesbos, but they undermine even this qualified approval by pointing out that the incident took place before the Persians corrupted him.

Given the events on Chios, it seems inexplicable that Astyochus and Pedaritus co-operated soon afterwards (8.33.2–4). While staying overnight near Erythrae on his way to the main fleet at Miletus, Astyochus was informed of the arrival of some Erythraean prisoners from Samos who were thought to be a risk to local security. He both corresponded with and met Pedaritus at this time. After the matter was settled to their mutual satisfaction Astyochus continued south. The incident is not discussed by scholars and it does not clarify the problem of the relative authority of either individual. Rather, it suggests either that the quarrel between them may have been exaggerated, or that they could both set their personal differences aside when necessary.

Thucydides says that Astyochus was so annoyed at the Chians' refusal to help him over Lesbos that he threatened to deny them any future assistance (8.33.1). This behaviour has been called treasonable,²⁰ although Thucydides does not claim at this point that Astyochus was working on the Persians' behalf. Astyochus' behaviour seems petulant, a conclusion reinforced by the report of his continued reluctance to help the Chians after he reached Miletus, despite further appeals from Pedaritus and the allies (8.38.4–5). He may, however, have had a good strategic reason for his refusal. If he recognised the threat that the Athenian base at Samos represented to Sparta's position in Ionia, then he knew that if he sent ships sent north to Chios, they could be intercepted.²¹ At the same time he would leave Miletus, Sparta's main naval base in Ionia, open to attack.

That the whole situation on Chios was more complicated than Thucydides records is suggested by Plutarch's report that some Chians complained to Sparta about Pedaritus' conduct (*Apophth. Lac.* 10). It is not clear whether their dissatisfaction was connected with this incident or with another development on Chios shortly afterwards when Pedaritus had some leading anti-Spartans executed (8.38.3). Any suggestions of internal dissent among Sparta's allies must surely call into question our understanding of the motives and actions of all those involved.

After the incident near Erythrae Astyochus joined the main fleet at Miletus (8.36.1). Therimenes handed over command to him, sailed off, and disappeared (8.38.1). Despite Van de Maele's suggestion that the navarch was somehow implicated in his fate (1971: 41), there is no evidence for it, nor does Thucydides imply as much. As Kagan has pointed out, Therimenes went off in a small boat in wintertime, when the weather was unpredictable (1987: 83, note 56).

While at Miletus, Astyochus became involved in an incident with Phrynichus, the Athenian general, Alcibiades, and Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap (8.50–51). Thucydides says that Phrynichus wrote to Astyochus to reveal the treacherous conduct of Alcibiades, who was said to be giving the Persians information about

²⁰ Van de Maele 1971: 42–43.

²¹ Busolt 1904: 1447, n. 2; Kagan 1987: 85.

both Sparta and Athens (8.46.1–5, 47.1, 50.1–51.3). Astyochus confronted Alcibiades with this letter in Tissaphernes' presence and turned informer for the Persians. Alcibiades retaliated by writing to the Athenians at Samos, informing them about Phrynichus' role and demanding that the general be put to death. Phrynichus wrote a second letter to Astyochus, this time giving him details about the Athenian defences on Samos in order to tempt the Spartan to attack. Astyochus passed this information, too, to Alcibiades, who in turn revealed Phrynichus' further treachery to the Athenians. Phrynichus found out about Alcibiades' second letter just in time and warned the Athenians that the Spartans were about to attack their base. As a result, Alcibiades' letter, which arrived at Samos soon after, was not believed and Alcibiades himself came under suspicion of collusion with the enemy.

The whole affair has rightly been described as strange.²² Hatzfeld (1951: 235–236) believed the story to have been fabricated by Alcibiades as an attack on Phrynichus, as the two may have been political enemies. If Thucydides' source for the story was Alcibiades or a member of his circle,²³ then it would have been in the informant's interest to discredit the role played by the navarch.

Astyochus' motives in this incident are not addressed, as attention usually centres on those of Phrynichus and Alcibiades. As a result, the navarch is assumed to be a dupe, whose responses were easily predicted and played upon by the far cleverer Athenians.²⁴ Phrynichus' letter, however, presented Astyochus with a choice: he could ignore the information or take advantage of the chance it presented to discredit Alcibiades with the Persians. His decision to do the latter is credible for personal and political motives. Although he had received orders from Sparta to have Alcibiades killed (8.45.1), Astyochus had been unable to do so, probably because the Athenian was already under Persian protection. Alcibiades' disgrace as a traitor in Persian eyes might be an acceptable alternative for the navarch to present to the Spartans, while he himself would appear responsible for maintaining the goodwill of the Persians. If Phrynichus counted on this reaction from Astyochus, then he was assuming that the navarch was a good officer who would act in Sparta's best interests.²⁵ By showing the second letter to Alcibiades and probably to Tissaphernes as before, Astyochus undermined Alcibiades' position with the satrap even further. It is possible that he thought of achieving even more than that. If Phrynichus was clever enough to anticipate Astyochus' response, it is possible that Astyochus behaved equally shrewdly in choosing to reveal the contents of both letters to Alcibiades, in the hope that that he would try to use it. The result would be confusion and suspicion in the Athenian command. Although his assessment of Astyochus' tenure is generally

²² Westlake 1956; Kagan 1987: 125.

²³ Brunt 1952: 72–81; Westlake 1989: 154–166.

²⁴ Grote 1855: 12–13; Westlake 1956: 100; Bloedow 1991.

²⁵ As Westlake (1956: 101) and Kagan (1987: 128) have pointed out, Astyochus could have used the information in Phrynichus' second letter to launch an attack on Samos, but he would have needed to corroborate any such suggestion from an enemy source which he already knew to be treacherous.

unfavourable, Kagan concluded that in this incident the Spartans could have asked no more of their navarch (1987: 129).

Thucydides also says that Astyochus turned paid informer for Tissaphernes at this time and so did not object to the small payments the satrap was currently making to the Spartan fleet. Thucydides may have distanced himself from the charge, however, as he added the phrase ὥς ἐλέγετο (8.50.3).²⁶ The passage is a confusing one as it contains some inconsistency in its account of the current financial status of the fleet. Hermocrates, the Syracusan commander, had protested about pay during Therimenes' command at Miletus, and the matter had been settled (8.29.1–2). This information highlights the role of the large western contingent in winning better conditions,²⁷ and is repeated by Thucydides at 8.45.3. Furthermore, Thucydides says that, when Astyochus arrived at Miletus, conditions in the fleet were good, the pay adequate, and the booty from Iasus still plentiful (8.36.1). It is difficult to believe that matters had deteriorated so significantly in so short a time.²⁸ Scholarly opinion on this charge of bribery against Astyochus is divided: those who believe him to be a consistently weak navarch accept the charge,²⁹ while those who note the problems with the passage as a whole reserve judgement.³⁰ As far as the evidence goes, there is no clear proof that Astyochus was being bribed by the Persians in 412. The charge may have come from a western source, a group that may have become already frustrated by the lack of decisive action and by having its freedom of decision and action curtailed by Spartan command (8.26.1, 84.2). It was also this group that led the protest over pay and initiated a confrontation with Astyochus in the following year. It may have already begun to spread rumours that his stay with Tissaphernes meant that he was in the satrap's pay.

While Astyochus was still with Tissaphernes the situation on Chios rapidly deteriorated as a result of increasingly severe Athenian attacks. Thucydides says that Pedaritus asked Astyochus for assistance, something that the navarch refused because of his earlier threat (8.40.1–3). Pedaritus complained to Sparta, and Astyochus changed his mind and began preparations to help (8.40.3), but only after he realised that the allies, too, were in favour of the plan. Thucydides implies that he was still petty-minded towards the Chians; others have explained that he was afraid of the effect of Pedaritus' complaints at Sparta,³¹ or delayed his decision to help because he was too timid to commit his fleet against the Athenians.³²

²⁶ See Westlake 1977: 361–362.

²⁷ Of the Spartan fleet of fifty-five ships that had arrived at Miletus, twenty-two (about forty per cent) came from the west (8.26.1). Diodorus claims that the western states provided as many as thirty-five vessels (13.34.4).

²⁸ Andrewes and Dover 1981: 271.

²⁹ Grote 1855: 401; Hatzfeld 1951: 324; Westlake 1968: 304–307.

³⁰ Andrewes and Dover 1981: 118; Kagan 1987: 83.

³¹ Westlake 1968: 296.

³² Kagan 1987: 85. It is not clear how many ships Astyochus had at Miletus. He left at least twelve there when he went to meet the *symboloi* at Cnidus (8.61.3). For the general problem of Thucydides' ship numbers in this war, see Andrewes and Dover 1981: 27–32.

Alternatively, Astyochus might have been considering the vulnerability of Sparta's current strategic position with its attention divided between Chios and Miletus, or, if he already knew that a group of high-ranking *symbouloi* was due to arrive from Sparta, he might have planned to send some ships to Chios, but to keep a suitable number in the south to ensure their safe arrival. Thucydides appears to acknowledge as much at 8.41.1.

It would not be surprising if disappointment over its current progress in Ionia produced serious political fall-out at Sparta and, perhaps, a change of ephors less favourable to an Ionian policy.³³ Any disagreement, however, must have been limited to how and where the war should be fought; continued involvement somewhere in the east seems not to have been questioned. Sparta's answer was to send eleven *symbouloi* to Ionia.

The function of *symbouloi* and the duration of their term in Spartan administration and command are not clear, nor do we know whether we have a complete record of all the occasions on which this office was used by the Spartans.³⁴ The reasons for their appointment vary as does the number chosen, but, because Thucydides records the previous appointment of *symbouloi* in situations in which a military commander is supposed to have failed, it has been assumed that they were appointed only under such circumstances.³⁵

On this occasion the Spartans sent the largest group of *symbouloi* with the widest mandate recorded hitherto in the Peloponnesian War. Their mission was clearly important: they included Lichas, a high-ranking diplomat,³⁶ they were sent in wintertime; their voyage was to be secret, and arrangements were made for a meeting between them and Tissaphernes at Cnidus (8.39.3–4, 43.2). Although winter sailing was not an insuperable obstacle in the ancient world, sudden and violent storms made it dangerous (8.31.3, 32.1, 34.1, 42.1). The secrecy of the voyage does not necessarily mean that this was yet another stereotypically timid Spartan naval force,³⁷ but rather that the Spartans did not wish the presence of such outstanding individuals to become widely known. If caught, they would make important hostages, and their loss to Spartan expertise would be significant.

Thus, contrary to the impression taken from Thucydides' account (8.39.2), Pedaritus' complaints alone are unlikely to have prompted the despatch of so large and important a group. Their presence implies that the Spartans wanted a

³³ Busolt 1904: 1469; Lewis 1977: 96; Kagan 1987: 71; Andrewes and Dover 1981: 26, 96.

³⁴ Roisman 1987: 411–419.

³⁵ Pritchett 1974: 36; Kagan 1978: 86; Andrewes and Dover 1981: 85. Roisman (1987: 418–419) suggested that *symbouloi* were intended to assist a navarch if the geographical area of his command changed; for example, in 429 the navarch Cnemus led an unsuccessful expedition to Acarnania. After the defeat of his reinforcements in the Gulf of Corinth, three *symbouloi* came from Sparta to help reorganise the allies for another attempt in the west against Naupactus (8.3.80–94). Because of the problems in defining their precise function within the Spartan system, I have retained the term *symbouloi* throughout.

³⁶ On Lichas, see Poralla 1985: 86.

³⁷ *contra* Kagan 1987: 88.

high-level investigation of the whole situation to date in Ionia and a decision made that was based on close knowledge of the circumstances. In any case, there may not have been enough time between the arrival of Pedaritus' letters from Chios, the Spartans' correspondence with Tissaphernes (8.43.2), and the departure of the *symbouloi* to allow for all the preparation involved in such an expedition.

Once in the east the *symbouloi* were to act without further reference to Sparta, that is, they were to investigate matters for themselves and to decide on and implement the best course for Spartan strategy. Thucydides emphasises their independence of decision by using the phrases ἡ μέλλει ἄριστα εἶξεν and ἦν δοκῇ (8.39.2) about their mandate. Diplomacy, too, was to be their responsibility: Astyochus does not appear to have been directly involved in any later dealings with the Persians; Lichas is the Spartan spokesman and negotiator (8.43.3–4, 84.5). The fact that there were as many as eleven *symbouloi* suggests that the Spartans were not yet ready to invest such wide powers of decision and action in the hands of a few, much less of one man.³⁸

Astyochus came south to escort the group to Cnidus once it safely reached the mainland (8.41.1). On the way he attacked Meropid Cos, which had been damaged in a severe earthquake (8.41.2–4). Kagan suggested that this was a detour that made little strategic sense and that Astyochus had to do something to impress the *symbouloi* after his lacklustre performance to date (1987: 88). There was, however, good reason for his action. Cos was currently a base for Athenian ships operating in the south (8.44.3); Astyochus sacked it to deprive the Athenians of its use. This was not contrary to the current Persian-Spartan agreement, which seems to have covered Spartan military action on the mainland only (8.37.2). The booty Astyochus gained would have been a bonus for the Peloponnesian fleet, as there is no suggestion that it yet needed money.

Thucydides says that Astyochus arrived by night at Cnidus and immediately put to sea again, despite bad weather, because of the news that an Athenian squadron was sheltering close by at Syme (8.41.3).³⁹ He would have to remove these ships before the *symbouloi* could reach Cnidus. The Spartan vessels were scattered in a storm, but the group with Astyochus found the Athenian patrol unprepared and attacked it. The Athenians had not expected an enemy force to appear under these conditions, and the result was the Spartans' first naval victory over the Athenians in this war, surely an important development for Spartan confidence. It also gave them control of the sea-lanes off the Cnidian peninsula, by now a vital route for Athens' supplies of grain, linen and flax (Diod. 14.79; Plut. *Per.* 37.3).⁴⁰

³⁸ Even after the growth of the power of the navarchy it was limited to a single term for one individual (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.7).

³⁹ For the date of the battle, see Sommerstein 1977.

⁴⁰ Sparta had recognised the importance of this area earlier and had attempted to control it. A naval squadron from the Peloponnese guarded Cnidus, while some of its vessels patrolled around Triopium on watch for merchant ships (8.35.2–4). The Athenians quickly captured this patrol and launched an

Astyochus has been given no credit for his success at Syme and his action has been regarded solely as the result of a lucky accident.⁴¹ Certainly, luck was on the side of the Spartans, but Astyochus showed determination and initiative in the encounter; he set sail for Syme by night and in poor weather, and he quickly capitalised on his luck in finding the Athenians initially at a loss. Both at Cos and Syme Astyochus showed what an effective officer he could be when his freedom of decision and action were not restricted. Since leaving Miletus, he had deprived the Athenians of a supply base, forced a battle, and achieved his objective, to clear the way for the safe arrival of the *symbouloi* at Cnidus. In addition, he had regained for Sparta control of the important sea-lanes of the south-east Aegean. By so doing, he had even, perhaps, ensured the support of Rhodes, which came over to the Spartan side shortly afterwards (8.44.1–2).⁴² Astyochus' actions rapidly improved Sparta's prospects in southern Ionia, and the fall of Rhodes gave it superiority at sea, as Athenian negotiators were to acknowledge to Tissaphernes (8.52.1).

Although Thucydides juxtaposes his description of the mandate of the *symbouloi* with a reference to the replacement of the navarch and to Pedaritus' complaints, the terms he uses to describe Astyochus' possible removal from office, *παύειν τῆς ναυαρχίας*, and his replacement, *Ἀντισθένη δὲ καθιστάναι* (8.39.2), do not in themselves suggest disgrace. Furthermore, the *symbouloi* would surely have taken swifter action to help Chios, had they come in response to Pedaritus' complaints alone; no assistance arrived for the island until later in the winter after the Spartan fleet moved to Rhodes (8.61.2).

The orders of the *symbouloi* may be linked to changes that are far less damning of the achievements of the navarch. According to Thucydides' account, the Spartans had given these men the power to decide how much support to give to action in the Hellespont. If they decided that Spartan interests were better served by moving the bulk of the fleet there, they would be starting a new naval campaign in a new theatre. They would then need a new commander, if they were continuing their practice from the Archidamian War of appointing a new navarch for a new campaign.⁴³ Alternatively, to retain Astyochus for a campaign in the Hellespont might prolong his period of command too far; it already appears to have been longer than that of any other navarch by this time.

unsuccessful attack on Cnidus. Athens' response indicates the threat the Spartan action represented to its interests in the south: after the naval disaster in Sicily in 413 linen and flax must have been crucial to the rebuilding of the Athenian fleet (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.19; *FGrH* 324 F46). This Spartan attempt at economic blockade anticipates their later use of this strategy in the Hellespont (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.35–36).

⁴¹ Kagan 1987: 89; Andrewes and Dover 1981: 89.

⁴² Although leading Rhodian oligarchs had probably been negotiating with the Spartans since at least the time of Dorieus' arrival (8.35.1), the victory at Syme may have helped convince any waverers that Sparta was capable of winning a naval war. Rhodes provided a naval base off the mainland, money, crews, and supplies (8.44.1). From Rhodes the Spartans exercised even greater control of the southern sea-lanes.

⁴³ Sealey 1976: 355–358.

These possibilities may explain why we do not hear of a formal investigation by the *symboloi* into Astyochus' conduct. The absence of any reference by Thucydides does not, of course, prove that some kind of enquiry did not take place, but it is strange that he did not mention so singular an event as the investigation outside Sparta of a serving Spartan officer. It would surely have been discussed among members of the Peloponnesian fleet had it occurred publicly, particularly by its touchy western contingent, and especially during the following year when they openly accused the navarch of collusion with Tissaphernes (8.83.3–84.3). If there was an enquiry Astyochus must have been able to explain himself satisfactorily, while his recent success at Syme demonstrated both his abilities and the powerful position he had gained for Sparta in the south. Under these conditions it is not surprising that the *symboloi* decided to continue to focus attention on Ionia and to retain Astyochus in command. Astyochus, then, remained in office and his replacement, Antisthenes, drops out of the picture.⁴⁴

Spartan prestige and confidence would have increased as a result of their recent victory and their subsequent control of southern waters and may have changed their relationship with Tissaphernes; the satrap now faced a demand to renegotiate a treaty with an ally who had successfully fought independently of him. It was, perhaps, this renewed confidence that caused Lichas to challenge so arrogantly the Persians' interpretation of the agreements negotiated by Chalcideus and Therimenes. One might legitimately ask, however, what Thucydides' source was for the details of Lichas' arguments and behaviour. If it was Alcibiades, then he would hardly have presented the Spartans in a favourable light (8.43.3, 52).

Tissaphernes broke off the talks, but the Spartans had an alternative plan ready: they moved both fleet and navarch to Rhodes (8.44.1–2), where they waited for some time for the satrap to change his mind. Tissaphernes seems to have delayed his decision to do so long enough to cause the Spartans financial problems and to threaten the possibility of desertions from their fleet.⁴⁵ By the end of the winter both sides were ready to resume talks, the Spartans because they needed money, and Tissaphernes because his discussions with Athenian representatives had come to nothing and because he was apprehensive about the damage a Peloponnesian fleet could do if it became desperate enough to ravage the mainland (8.56–57). A third treaty was agreed, which gained for Sparta clarification on the question of pay and included the promise of the support of the Persian fleet.

Thucydides' lack of explanation about the responsibilities, actions, and movements of the *symboloi* and the navarch after this time is frustrating.⁴⁶ The only

⁴⁴ He must have returned to Sparta at some time, as he was a member of the group sent in 397 to investigate Dercyllidas (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.6).

⁴⁵ The money from Rhodes would have lasted them about a month (Busolt 1904: 1450). Thucydides says they were there for eighty days. On the problems involved with this figure, see Andrewes and Dover 1981: 147–148.

⁴⁶ Andrewes and Dover 1981: 147–149, 361–383; Lewis 1977: 75–108; Hornblower 1987: 136–154. Some speculation on their movements is possible. Most of them may have returned to Sparta

symbolos known to have stayed for some time in the east was Lichas, who helped enforce the terms agreed with Persia and who later died in Ionia (8.84.5). While he or any of the others remained, the navarch would surely have had to consult them about any action he may have contemplated. In 418, the only other recorded occasion when a large number of *symboloi* (ten) was appointed, they clearly had greater authority than the king (5.63.4). The closest that Thucydides gets to defining the method of procedure of the *symboloi* of 413/2 is when he uses the term *ξυνεπιμέλεσθαι* (8.39.2) about their consultations. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether this means that they were supposed to decide among themselves or to include the navarch in their deliberations.

Astyochus and the fleet returned to Miletus in the spring of 411. He then sailed with some ships from Chios and made a show of Spartan naval power before Samos. The Athenian fleet there was weakened at the time by the need to send ships to the Hellespont to counter some Spartan action in the north and on Thasos (8.63.2, 64.2–5). The Athenians were also divided and suspicious as a result of political turmoil and so did not respond to the Spartan challenge (8.63.2). Thucydides' account of the action is not very clear, but it appears that the Spartan fleet did not need to provoke a confrontation with Athens unless it was under very favourable conditions, since it now had the promise of Persian naval assistance.

A second opportunity came when, apparently persuaded by growing dissatisfaction among the western sailors at the lack of decisive action and at the problems over pay, the Spartans decided to sail to Mycale, where there was to be a combined land and sea assault (8.78–79).⁴⁷ Astyochus also led this operation. Perhaps he intended to surprise the Athenian fleet at Mycale and to drive it to land where a Milesian force would then attack. In the event, the Athenians were warned of the plan and sent for reinforcements from the Hellespont. The Spartans withdrew when these ships arrived at Samos. Again, the Spartans' withdrawal is not necessarily a sign of the navarch's timidity;⁴⁸ they did not need to fight under anything less than the most advantageous conditions.

Thucydides records no objections from Sparta's western allies to the withdrawal from Mycale, despite their earlier feelings about the need for a decisive engagement (8.78). They were, however, still angry at the irregularity of the pay from Tissaphernes (8.80.1). This feeling, coupled with the news of Alcibiades' return to Athens and rumours that the navarch was in the pay of the Persians, made

after the treaty was concluded with Tissaphernes to report on their findings and actions. Lichas, who remained behind, advised the Milesians not to annoy the Persians until the war was won (8.84.2). He was also invited by Tissaphernes to accompany him to Aspendus to wait for the Persian fleet (8.87.1). Thucydides does not say when Lichas died (Cartledge 1984; Hornblower 1987: 151–152).

⁴⁷I follow Andrewes and Dover (1981: 272–273) in assuming that this is a separate action from the one described at 8.63.2, although Thucydides' account is not entirely clear.

⁴⁸*contra* Kagan 1987: 104.

them distrust Persia even more (8.83–84.3). A public confrontation between the westerners and the navarch followed.

Astyochus received the brunt of the protest because he was the fleet's commander and, presumably, responsible for its morale. He was also the Spartan representative most visible and accessible to them. Thucydides provides no evidence for the charge of bribery at this time against Astyochus, but it likely to be the sort of rumour spread by a disgruntled group that had won no recent booty and saw its commanding officer in the company of the Persians, who were not producing the level of pay it expected. Dorieus, in particular, may have been opposed to the decision to continue to wait for the Persian fleet; he came from Rhodes, an eastern Aegean state, and, perhaps, had less faith in Persian promises. Both in this incident and in the Milesians' attack on Tissaphernes' fort at about the same time, the western contingent played a leading role in criticising the Persians (8.84.4). Astyochus' angry and inflexible response to the protest suggests that he expected an assertion of Spartan authority to be enough to resolve it, as it may have done for the mainland allies in Sparta's league. Also, perhaps the navarch was frustrated by not being able to follow up his victory at Syme. Whatever the cause of his behaviour, Astyochus overreacted on this occasion. When the men refused to obey him, he raised his stick, the symbol of his authority, and appeared to threaten Dorieus physically. The dissident sailors then advanced on the navarch, who barely escaped with his life. The whole incident shows the very high level of tension between the fleet command and its western members by this time (8.82.1–2, 86.4).

Thucydides indicates that it was shortly after this that Astyochus was replaced as navarch. He returned to Sparta, possibly in early autumn, 411 (8.85.1–4). Thucydides is vague on the timing of this event, but the Spartans had spent some time in that summer waiting for the arrival of the Persian fleet.⁴⁹ Astyochus was recalled, perhaps because his authority was compromised by the incident with Dorieus or because the Spartans, concerned about the non-appearance of the Persian fleet, were once again considering the possibility of opening up a major campaign in the Hellespont, where they had recently achieved some success (8.80.3).⁵⁰

The navarch was accompanied on his return by Hermocrates of Syracuse, who wanted to complain about Tissaphernes, and Gaulites of Caria, who was there to defend the satrap's interests (8.85.2). The presence of these representatives perhaps means that there was to be a special enquiry into the Ionian situation.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Perhaps in late August or early September. The timing of Astyochus' return to Sparta is also important to the arguments about the duration of the Spartan navarchy early in the Ionian War: see Andrewes and Dover 1981: 280–281; Sealey 1976: 335–338.

⁵⁰ The new navarch, Mindarus, took the fleet north soon after his arrival (8.99).

⁵¹ Possibly at the time of the navarch's presentation of his accounts of office, if Spartan practice was like that of the Athenians.

Neither Thucydides nor Xenophon suggests that Astyochus was on trial over his record in the east (8.85.1; Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.31). Despite Hermocrates' leading role in the differences over naval pay and conditions in Ionia in 412, his hostility in 411 was directed against Tissaphernes, not Astyochus. In fact, Xenophon explains that Hermocrates and Astyochus successfully co-operated in persuading the Spartans against Tissaphernes.

Some changes in the navarch's office and authority may have followed Astyochus' tenure, perhaps as a result of it or the reports of the *symboloi*. Mindarus, who replaced him as navarch, seems to have been the first such officer whose term of command was annual, a sign that some regulation of the navy was under way.⁵² In addition, Hippocrates and Philippus were appointed as assistants to the navarch; they oversaw important locations and reported directly to Mindarus. They may have served as *epistoleis* (8.99.1: ὁ τε Φίλιππος ἐπεστάλκει Μινδάρῳ τῷ ναυάρχῳ καὶ ἄλλος Ἰπποκράτης, ἀνὴρ Σπαρτιάτης καὶ ὢν ἐν Φασήλιδι, . . .). This office, based on its name, perhaps began as secretarial, but by the time of Lysander grew in importance to become that of vice-admiral (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.7).⁵³ Both men were officers who had gained some experience in the east by this time; Philippus, commander at Miletus under Astyochus (8.28.5), was sent to Aspendus to report the arrival of the Persian fleet there (8.87.6), while Hippocrates, who came to Ionia with Dorieus (8.35.1), served as commander in the Hellespont (8.107.2; Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.23) and later replaced Mindarus when he was killed in battle at Cyzicus (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.23).

CONCLUSION

During their first season of campaigning abroad, the Spartans had every reason to become seriously concerned with their progress in Ionia after initial rapid success. Events on Chios and at Miletus emphasised the difficulties involved in fighting on two fronts and in having the decisions from both either referred to Sparta or controlled by different officers on the spot, whose areas of responsibility and authority and whose relationship to each other were not clearly defined or demarcated. It was the confusion arising from this situation that the *symboloi* were sent to investigate and improve. Our difficulties in understanding the timing and duration of the Spartan navy illustrate how ill equipped Sparta's current naval command structure was for this kind of war. Sparta's relationship with the Persians and the defection of Alcibiades complicated the situation even further.

Thucydides' judgement of Astyochus' predecessors in office and his report that Astyochus was to be replaced because of complaints against him by a fellow officer have influenced subsequent assessments of the navarch's personality and abilities and overshadowed his real achievements. His actions in the face of Sparta's problems in Ionia show that he should not be dismissed as a stereotypically timid

⁵² Sealey 1976: 348–358.

⁵³ Michell 1964: 279.

or inept Spartan naval officer. Sparta's inability to eliminate Athens by a quick victory in 412/1 was not the fault of its navarch.

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