

I. Introduction

Thucydides begins and ends his History of the Peloponnesian War with stasis. As early in his work as the so-called “Archaeology” (or *Tekmeria*) he shows Greek cities struggling with internal conflicts. Some of the final events in book eight are the Athenian stasis and the rule of the Four Hundred. Thucydides recounts numerous incidents of stasis throughout his work, highlighting the phenomenon to such a degree that some believe that he viewed the entire Peloponnesian War as a fundamentally internal conflict.¹

The most prominent stasis in his narrative is the Korkyrean civil war. Thucydides writes several chapters narrating the events of the civil war, and gives an uncharacteristic moral authorial commentary about the events of the stasis, where he indicates that atrocities first seen in Korkyra spread to the rest of Greece. He gives more attention to the Korkyrean civil war than to any other similar event in his work. His narrative of the Korkyrean stasis has become the standard Thucydidean stasis, against which all others in his work are measured. In addition, Thucydides immediately follows his narrative of the Korkyrean stasis with a discussion of stasis in the remaining years of the Peloponnesian War.

After denouncing the Korkyrean civil war for the suffering it caused, he adds that “it seemed greater, because it was the first of these, while later all of Greece was also in turmoil” (3.82.1).² He reinforces this claim by saying that later staseis grew worse than that of Korkyra: “so the affairs of the cities were divided by faction, and where it came later, it carried to extremes the change in thinking by awareness of earlier events” (3.82.3).³ Thucydides’ claims

¹ Most notable is Price’s book-length exploration of this idea: Price, Jonathan. *Thucydides and Internal War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

² ἔδοξε μᾶλλον, διότι ἐν τοῖς πρώτῃ ἐγένετο, ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη.

³ ἐστασίαζέ τε οὖν τὰ τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τὰ ἐφυστερίζοντά που πύσσει τῶν προγενομένων πολὺ ἐπέφερε τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας (3.82.3).

seem to suggest that while Korkyra caused truly horrific violence, later civil conflicts during the Peloponnesian War were even worse.

Clearly Thucydides intended his account of the Korkyrean stasis to serve as a yardstick for other incidents of stasis in his work. However, analysis of the many episodes of stasis he includes reveals that the connection between the Korkyrean civil war and ensuing staseis is less certain than Thucydides claims. Korkyra is by far the most violent episode of stasis in the entire Peloponnesian war, and one of the longest lasting. Furthermore, several years passed between the Korkyrean stasis and any similar incidents of any importance.

Thus two possibilities exist: either Thucydides exaggerated the relevance of the Korkyrean stasis, or he chose it as the centerpiece of his stasis narrative for other reasons. It is unlikely that Thucydides, an intelligent and perceptive author known for his commitment to seeking out the truth, would commit such an error as making a false claim for rhetorical effect. This paper will attempt to analyze the incidents of stasis in Thucydides' work to gain a better understanding of how Thucydides understood stasis and wrote about it.

Thucydides could have intended several different effects for his claims in 3.82. One possibility is that designed the stasis narrative to parallel that of the plague that struck Athens. His description of the plague and its aftermath in book two is one of the few sections in his work where, as in the account of the Korkyrean civil war, he injects moral statements about the devolution of society into his narrative. In that section, he comments that he wishes to record the symptoms of the plague so that future readers can recognize it if it returns (2.48.3). He goes on to describe the physical symptoms of the plague and then comments on the wave of disorder and lawlessness that followed. He delivers his narrative of the Korkyrean civil war in the same style, which raises the possibility that he included the 'symptoms' of stasis for the same reason: so that

readers would be able to identify a stasis if they ever found themselves affected by one.⁴ This hypothesis justifies the presence of 3.82, but does not explain why Thucydides would make a questionable claim about the spread of stasis throughout Greece.

Another possibility is that Thucydides, having made his assertion that stasis grew more violent and more common as the war progressed, decided not to include any examples of this process. Necessarily, the incidents of stasis that he *does* include in his work would have to be important for some other reason, and above all for their relationship to the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides wove many themes into his history of the war, and stasis was an important theme.⁵

The reason for this tension between his rhetorically effective claims in recounting the Korkyrean stasis, and his broader narrative, which consists mostly of accurate reporting, lies in his main objective in writing the history of the war. Thucydides recorded the war between the Athenians and the Spartans because he expected it would be worthy of his efforts. The two combatants were at the height of their powers when the war broke out and Thucydides began his project. The entire Greek world had mobilized and chosen a side (1.1-3). During the Peloponnesian War, “sufferings were brought upon the Greeks that were not repeated in an equivalent period of time” (1.23.1),⁶ and there had never been “such an exodus and killing of men, some on account of war, others on account of factionalism” (1.23.2).⁷ Thucydides also mentions other catastrophes such as earthquakes, eclipses, droughts, famines, and plagues (1.23.3). From the beginning of his work Thucydides emphasizes the tragedy and suffering at

⁴ Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, 14-18.

⁵ Some notable works include Barnard, Mark. “Stasis in Thucydides’ Narrative and Analysis of Factionalism in the Polis.” PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1980; Fuks, Alexander. “Thucydides and the Stasis in Korkyra.” *The American Journal of Philology* 92, no. 1 (January 1971): 48-55; Lintott, Andrew. *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982; Macleod, Colin. “Thucydides on Faction (3.82-3).” In *Collected Essays of Colin Macleod*, edited by Barbara Macleod, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005; Price, Jonathan. *Thucydides and Internal War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Puckett, Scott. “Stasis in the Ancient Greek Historians.” PhD diss., Tulane University, 2013.

⁶ παθήματα τε ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τῇ Ἑλλάδι οἷα οὐχ ἕτερα ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ (1.23.1).

⁷ φυγαὶ τοσαῖδε ἀνθρώπων καὶ φόνος, ὁ μὲν κατ’ αὐτὸν τὸν πόλεμον, ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ στασιάζειν (1.23.2).

this time, and underscores that war and stasis were the chief agents of this suffering.⁸ Thucydides frequently shows that history can be educational, he clearly considers teaching about the suffering that war and stasis can cause one of the chief objectives of his work.

Throughout the course of his work, Thucydides mentions stasis dozens of times and implies it dozens more. In the majority of those instances, the victors of a stasis expel their enemies. Thucydides mentions that the Peloponnesian war caused both flight and death, either through the war itself or through stasis. In the bulk of his narrative, stasis causes flight, while war causes death. However, in Korkyra (and only a few later examples), factions were intent on the complete destruction of their opponents, not just their defeat. For this reason the stasis at Korkyra devolved to a state of violence unmatched throughout the entire war. Thucydides most probably chose Korkyra for his commentary on stasis because of this violence.

But the contrast between his claims of worsening violence and the extremes reached in Korkyra still remains. Thucydides has shown that suffering was widespread, and that stasis was a cause of it. All that differs is that the intensity of the damage caused by stasis seems not to have increased as the war progressed.

Throughout the course of the war, the number of staseis increased. Thucydides claims that awareness of earlier events led to extremes in thinking, but this awareness manifested itself in his narrative as an increase in the ubiquity of stasis. Thus stasis affected greater numbers of people as the war ran on, and successful subversive campaigns by generals like Demosthenes, Eurymedon, or Brasidas capitalized on the paralysis and division brought about by stasis to take control of enemy cities. This is where the true extremity revealed itself: the sudden ease with

⁸ Rusten, Jeffrey. "Kinesis in the Preface to Thucydides." *Kinesis: The Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion*, edited by Christina A. Clark et al. (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2015) pp. 27–40. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.7684934.8.

which a stasis could develop. Thucydides suggests this in 3.82.1, but does not fully develop the thought or clarify his later assertion.

He says instead that the revolution in thinking sparked at Korkyra precipitated increasingly cunning attacks and more frequent attempts to seize power, as well as pushing people's desire for vengeance to new heights. In reality, a large fraction of incidents of stasis that occur after Korkyra are the result of an army arriving outside a city and creating a divide among the citizens within. In situations like this, there is usually relatively little violence or treachery. However, in the few examples that Thucydides reports which do describe staseis that do last longer and are the results of plots, there is indeed a 'revolution in thinking.' This revolution is a new murderous disposition of individuals living through stasis. Before the civil war at Korkyra, the vast majority of staseis ended with the defeated party fleeing the city. However, after the democrats at Korkyra massacred their oligarchic opponents, later cities proved willing to utterly destroy their opponents instead of driving them out of the city. This new attitude is less visible in these instances because there are fewer atrocities like those at Korkyra where mobs dragged people from sanctuaries and killed them. The revolution in thinking that Thucydides describes does not cause violence to worsen objectively, it only changes peoples' mindset so that they are more disposed to begin a stasis and murder their fellow citizens.

II. Korkyra

Thucydides writes at great length about the stasis at Korkyra, since it was "one of the first which had broken out" (3.82.1). Furthermore, Korkyra was a strategically important city in his work; it was involved with the dispute at Epidamnos that started the war, and it controlled one of the largest navies in Greece. While the Korkyrean civil war did not impact either side of the

Peloponnesian War directly, Korkyra's self-destruction removed its navy from the Peloponnesian War, which was strategically significant. His account (3.70-3.84) describes the origins of the conflict, provides a summary of the important events, and examines the internal features of stasis. In the main body of the narrative (3.70-3.81), Thucydides outlines the course of the civil war up to the arrival of an Athenian fleet led by Eurymedon. His conclusion (3.82-3.84) analyzes the behavior of the Korkyreans and describes how stasis spread to the rest of Greece, "with rival efforts everywhere by the leaders of the people to bring in the Athenians, and the oligarchs, the Spartans" (3.82.1).⁹ He adds that these leaders are not motivated by genuine desire for reform, only greed: "for in the cities the leaders, each with attractive slogans, the commons with equal politics and the aristocrats with the rule of the wise, made the commons their prizes, cherishing them in words only" (3.82.8).¹⁰

Most of Thucydides' claims in 3.82-3.84 are drawn from his account of the civil war. Thus his conclusion serves the important function of connecting his analysis of people's behavior to actual events.

The stasis at Korkyra resulted from a conspiracy. After the naval battle over Epidamnus, the Corinthians suborned about 250 of their Korkyrean prisoners, and persuaded them to hand over their home city to Corinth (3.70.1).¹¹ Upon their release and return to Korkyra, these conspirators brought Peithias, a self-proclaimed proxenos¹² for Athens, to trial, accusing him of enslaving Korkyra to the Athenians. Their attack failed, and he successfully countersued five of them for religious violations (3.70.4).

⁹ διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἕκασταχοῦ τοῖς τε τῶν δήμων προστάταις τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐπάγεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους (3.82.1)

¹⁰ οἱ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι προστάντες μετὰ ὀνόματος ἑκάτεροι εὐπρεποῦς, πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς καὶ ἀριστοκρατίας σῶφρονος προτιμήσει, τὰ μὲν κοινὰ λόγῳ θεραπεύοντες ἄλλα ἐποιοῦντο (3.82.8).

¹¹ Cartwright, David. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides: A Companion to Rex Warner's Penguin Translation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), ad loc. (p. 155).

¹² ἐθελοπρόξενός (3.70.3).

The conspirators broke into the Korkyrean assembly, killed Peithias and sixty others, and seized power (3.70.6).¹³ A Corinthian trireme with Spartan ambassadors soon arrived at the city, and the conspirators, emboldened by their presence, attacked their democratic opponents and defeated them (3.72.2).

The next day the fighting continued, and both sides attempted to gain allies by offering slaves their freedom in return for their loyalty.¹⁴ Most slaves sided with the democrats, while the oligarchic conspirators hired mercenaries (3.73).

A few days later, the violence resumed. This time the democrats were victorious. Thucydides reports that in the fighting women attacked their enemies by throwing tiles from their rooftops (3.74.1). Stunned by this defeat and fearing a counterattack, the oligarchs set fire to the people's houses, hoping to delay their advance.¹⁵ The resulting fire destroyed much of the city (3.74.2). The Corinthian ship, meanwhile, had sailed away upon learning of the oligarchs' defeat (3.74.3).

The next day the Athenian general Nikostratos arrived from Naupaktos with twelve ships and reinforcements. He calmed the city and arranged a truce between the democrats and oligarchs and proposed an offensive and defensive alliance with Athens (3.75.1).¹⁶ He then prepared to sail away. The leaders of the people convinced him that the city still needed

¹³ Gomme, A. W. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford University Press, 1956), III.70.6 (p. 361) points out that the entire oligarchic faction must have attacked the assembly.

¹⁴ Korkyra was one of the few cities to use large numbers of slaves for agriculture, and in some cases as rowers in their warships (Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, III. 73 (p. 362-3)).

¹⁵ Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, III.74.2 (p.363) remarks that burning the houses would have made the lines of attack on the oligarch's position more open and accessible, and reasons that the oligarchs started the fire in response to an actual attack, not out of fear of the possibility of one.

¹⁶ David Cartwright believes that this alliance was concluded at this time (Cartwright, David. *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, III.75 (p.156)), and Athens' aid to Korkyra when the Peloponnesian fleet arrived supports this view, but Thucydides says in 3.80 that the Athenians sent their fleet as the revolution broke out, not after Nikostratos concluded the alliance: ἐξήκοντα νῆες Ἀθηναίων προσπλεύουσαι ἀπὸ Λευκάδος: ἄς οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι πυνθανόμενοι τὴν στάσιν καὶ τὰς μετ' Ἀλκίδου ναῦς ἐπὶ Κέρκυραν μελλούσας πλεῖν ἀπέστειλαν (3.80.2). Furthermore, Athens and Korkyra already had a defensive alliance (1.44.1, Gomme (1956) III.70.2, (p.360)).

assistance, and asked him to leave five of his ships at Korkyra, while they would man five ships of their own and send them with him (3.75.2). He agreed, and the democrats began to draft the oligarchs to serve on the ships leaving the city. The oligarchs, detecting the plot, took refuge in a temple (3.75.3).

The democrats rearmed themselves and tried to attack the suppliant oligarchs, but Nikostratos stopped them. (3.75.4). The rest of the oligarchs feared for their safety and went to the temple of Hera, but the democrats ferried them to an island where they would be safe and could do no harm with a plot of their own (3.75.5).

A week later a Peloponnesian fleet carrying the Spartan generals Alkidas and Brasidas arrived at the Korkyrean harbor (3.76). The democrats brought the oligarchs back from the island, ignored Athenian tactical advice and put up a feeble resistance (3.77). They were defeated (3.79.1), but the Peloponnesians had little interest in plundering Korkyra itself and instead laid waste to the mainland (3.79.3).

Soon after Korkyra received word that an Athenian fleet of sixty ships under the command of Eurymedon was approaching, sent to reinforce the democrats in the city against the Peloponnesian fleet of Alkidas, which immediately fled (3.80.2). Again emboldened by the support of their allies, the democrats attacked the oligarchs. They killed many who were just disembarking their ships. They convinced fifty of the oligarchs hiding in the Temple of Hera to stand trial, and executed them all (3.81.2). The others still in the temple killed themselves to avoid a similar fate. Thucydides emphasizes the fact that these deaths occurred on sacred ground (3.81.3). Eurymedon and his fleet stayed for seven days, during which the Korkyrean democrats murdered every oligarch they could find. Thucydides adds that some were killed over personal

grudges or private debts (3.81.4).¹⁷ The violence reached horrific levels: “for a father killed even his son and suppliants were both ripped from sanctuaries and killed right there” (3.81.5).¹⁸

Those oligarchs who managed to escape first took refuge on the mainland and seized forts there. From there they launched raids on Korkyra, and caused a severe famine by destroying crops (3.85.2). The oligarchs asked Sparta and Corinth for help retaking the city, but were ignored. Eventually, they crossed back over to the island and fortified themselves on Mt. Istone, from which they raided the countryside (4.2.3). This state of affairs continued until after the battle at Sphacteria in 425 BCE.

The Athenians Eurymedon—who had been at Korkyra during the most violent part of the civil war—and Sophokles sailed to Korkyra and assisted their democratic allies. The oligarchs had based themselves on Mt. Istone and had been waging war on the countryside with great success (4.46.1). The Athenians and the Korkyrean democrats attacked the oligarchs and captured their fort. The oligarchs surrendered on very specific terms: they would lay down their arms only if the Athenians, not other Korkyreans, decided their fate (4.46.2). Eurymedon and Sophokles took their prisoners to an island, where they would be kept until transport to Athens could be arranged. They were given a kind of parole, with the agreement that if any of them tried to escape, all of them would be punished (4.46.3). The Korkyrean democrats felt that Athenian justice would be too soft, and developed a plot to have the prisoners killed. The democrats sent agents to the oligarchs on the island, warning them that the Athenian generals planned to execute them all, and that their only hope for survival was to escape (4.46.5). Sure enough, some tried to escape, were captured, and the Athenian generals handed all the oligarchs over to the democrats

¹⁷ Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, III.81.4 (p.369) believes that charges of conspiracy were used as pretexts for these murders, and I agree. The change in morals only affects virtues related to party affiliation, and killing for private purposes would still be considered reprehensible unless it were given the disguise of factional conflict.

¹⁸ καὶ γὰρ πατὴρ παῖδα ἀπέκτεινε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀπεσπῶντο καὶ πρὸς αὐτοῖς ἐκτείνοντο (3.81.5).

(4.47.1). The democrats put the oligarchs in a single building and killed them all with spears, arrows, and roof tiles (4.48). The democrats then went to Mt. Istone and enslaved all the women in the oligarchs' fort.

Thucydides declares that “in this way the Korkyreans from the mountain were destroyed by the people, and the civil war, having lasted so long, ended at this point” (4.48.5).¹⁹

Thucydides does not make this point, but the civil war ended in the same way that it had begun, with deceit. The democratic ploy to trick the oligarchs into causing their own destruction is much the same as earlier stratagems employed during the main conflict in 427 BCE.

In 3.82, Thucydides describes how stasis spread to the rest of the Greek world: “after that, virtually all of Greece was in turmoil, with opposite efforts everywhere by the democrats to bring in the Athenians and the oligarchs the Lacedaimonians” (3.82.1).²⁰ War, he adds, provided rival factions with the ability to easily call for external allies who could oust their opponents (3.82.1). He comments that “many difficulties fell upon the cities in stasis, things occurring as they always will occur, as long as the nature of man is the same, greater or lesser and changing in appearances, as the changes of every incident dictate” (3.82.2).²¹ However, he says that the difficulties occurring after Korkyra were greater, not lesser. He adds that “the affairs of the cities were in stasis, and where it came later with those coming before as an example, it bore to extremes the change in thinking with regard to the cunning of attacks and the extraordinary nature of retribution” (3.82.3).²²

¹⁹ τοιοῦτω μὲν τρόπῳ οἱ ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους Κερκυραῖοι ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου διεφθάρησαν, καὶ ἡ στάσις πολλὴ γενομένη ἐτελεύτησεν ἐς τοῦτο (4.48.5).

²⁰ ἐπει ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη, διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἑκασταχοῦ τοῖς τε τῶν δήμων προστάταις τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐπάγεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους (3.82.1).

²¹ καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιότερα καὶ τοῖς εἴδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἑκασταὶ αἰ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχῶν ἐφιστῶνται (3.82.2).

²² ἐστασίαζέ τε οὖν τὰ τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τὰ ἐφυστερίζοντά που πύσσει τῶν προγενομένων πολὺ ἐπέφερε τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῦ καινοῦσθαι τὰς διανοίας τῶν τ' ἐπιχειρήσεων περιτεχνήσει καὶ τῶν τιμωριῶν ἀτοπία (3.82.3).

Next he begins to describe the internal features of stasis that affect the Greek cities after the civil war at Korkyra. The description of these internal features is very similar to Thucydides' earlier description of the plague symptoms, both in terminology and included details.²³ Stasis, he says, upends the normal moral values of a city in two ways. First, the names for certain behaviors change: “reckless daring was named the courage of a friend, forward looking hesitation was gilded cowardice, wisdom was a cover for a lack of manliness, and anything for the sake of prudence was inaction. Incredible aggression was the lot of a man, and to plot for a safeguard against misfortune was a reasonable way of turning away [danger]” (3.82.4).²⁴ This change in values is not represented in the events of Korkyra, since there is very little discussion of individuals involved in the fighting. It is easy to imagine these distorted virtues being valued in the midst of a violent civil war.

Secondly, Thucydides describes types of actions that became common or acceptable in cities filled by stasis. Almost every one of the actions has a corresponding example in his earlier narrative of the Korkyrean stasis. For instance, Thucydides says that party relationships were more important than family ties—in his earlier narrative he described fathers killing their own sons. Again, he says that, “if any oaths of truce were made...they only had authority when there was no other advantage to be had” (3.82.7).²⁵ The earlier narrative described several occasions where the democrats broke their truces with the oligarchs and attacked them, notably when they tried to enlist their opponents on Nikostratos' ships (3.75.2) and then later killed them when they got off their ships (3.81.2). He says that “plotting any action was admirable, and suspicion of a

²³ Price, *Thucydides and Internal War*, p. 15.

²⁴ τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν· τὸ δ' ἐμπλήκτως ὄξυ ἀνδρὸς μοίρα προσετέθη, ἀσφαλεία δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὐλογος (3.82.4).

²⁵ καὶ ὄρκοι εἴ ποῦ ἄρα γένοιτο ξυναλλαγῆς... διδόμενοι ἴσχυον οὐκ ἐχόντων ἄλλοθεν δύναμιν (3.82.7).

plot was even cleverer” (3.82.5),²⁶ which harkens back to the oligarch’s suspicions (later proved correct) that the democrats’ plans to send five of their ships with Nicostratus were a ploy to dispose of their enemies. Both sides in the civil war were constantly suspicious of the other’s intentions. After that plot, the democrats feared retaliation from the oligarchs and sent four hundred of them who were suppliants in the temple of Hera to an island (3.74.5).

In addition, “to avenge oneself on someone was of greater importance than to not have been harmed in the first place” (3.82.7).²⁷ While the entirety of the Korkyrean civil war was filled with preemptive strikes, one notable example is when the oligarchs set fire to the center of the city, burning down not only their enemies’ houses but their own as well (3.74.2). This attack risked the complete destruction of the city just to prevent the democrats from attacking the oligarchs.

A considerable number of points made in sections of authorial commentary on the Korkyrean stasis reflect back to the narrative of that conflict. But Thucydides also describes some events in the commentary that are not paralleled by the events at Korkyra. Most of these are descriptions of the tragic unraveling of Greek society. Thucydides reports that there is a complete disappearance of trust (3.83.1) and that everyone focused on self-defense (3.83.2). The stupid usually killed the intelligent, since they feared being outsmarted and launched preemptive attacks (3.83.3). Religion completely lost its ability to manage public behavior (3.82.8), but both parties used lofty rhetoric to justify atrocities (3.82.8). Worst of all, the moderates in the cities were killed for refusing to choose sides and trying to escape the violence (3.82.8). This kind of fanaticism was almost unheard of.

²⁶ ἐπιβουλεύσας δέ τις τυχὸν ξυνετὸς καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος (3.82.5).

²⁷ ἀντιτιμωρήσασθαι τέ τινα περὶ πλείονος ἢν ἢ αὐτὸν μὴ προπαθεῖν (3.82.7).

It is important to note that these moral comments are describing stasis in Greece, not in Korkyra alone. But Thucydides describes actions that are clearly related to those at Korkyra. This has the effect of tying the events of the Korkyrean civil war to those that occurred later. Unfortunately, Thucydides does not go into greater detail about other incidents of stasis in the rest of his work, so these internal features are not helpful for identifying stasis where Thucydides does not use the word itself. Thucydides attributes the savagery of the stasis to the war, a “violent teacher” (3.82.2)²⁸ that “matches peoples’ minds to their circumstances” (3.82.2).²⁹ Because of the war, the Greek cities suffered many tragedies such as those Thucydides has delineated in his account of the Korkyrean stasis. The cause of these tragedies was a lust for power “on account of greed and ambition” (3.82.8).³⁰

In this section, Thucydides has clearly laid out the environment in which stasis appeared throughout Greece. The Peloponnesian War enabled factions to call for external support to defeat their enemies. Some external allies, like Brasidas, were moderate. Others, like Eurymedon, were much more bloodthirsty. People embroiled in a stasis changed their evaluation of behavior, prizing aggression and deceit instead of nobility and wisdom. And most importantly, awareness of the stasis at Korkyra persuaded factions of the viability of stasis as a means to seize power, and changed their disposition, so that they were even more creative in their ways to divide their cities and even more extreme in their vengeance against their opponents. Thucydides has called war a “violent teacher” (3.82.2). This section has shown exactly how violent a teacher war can be. The usefulness of Thucydides’ work lies in its ability to relate the same lessons as war itself

²⁸ βίαιος διδάσκαλος (3.82.2).

²⁹ πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ (ibid.).

³⁰ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν (3.82.8).

can, without the suffering. The next section will examine the other examples of stasis in Thucydides' work to compare them with the Korkyrean stasis and Thucydides' own comments.

III. Pre-Korkyrean Stasis

Thucydides writes about stasis throughout his entire work; however, his use of the term is inconsistent. There are instances where he uses the term stasis—whether the noun στάσις or a form of the verb στασιάζω—to refer to civil wars and others where he describes coups and less bloody conflicts. In other passages he does not use the word stasis at all, despite referring to events that clearly constitute a stasis. Usually in these circumstances, the existence of stasis is less important than some other aspect of the event, so it receives a different name (for example, a revolution that resulted from stasis might be called a revolution, since the revolt is more important than the internal divisions). There are certain characteristics that unify his idea of stasis throughout his work,³¹ but largely these characteristics are derived from his famous passage in book three describing the stasis at Korkyra. One unifying theme across his work is that all these staseis are caused by greed and personal ambition. Another common feature is that cities in stasis are paralyzed and suffering.

This chapter separates Thucydides' accounts of stasis into those that occur in the context of Korkyra and those that do not. Most of the staseis that Thucydides describes are influenced in various ways by the Peloponnesian war, but some are not. The incidents of stasis that occur during the war can be further divided into several categories. Some are coups or revolutions, others are prolonged civil wars, while still others are the result of conspiracies. Others occur as

³¹ Price, "Thucydides and Internal War," includes the transvaluation of words (p.39), a lapse between words and actions (p. 45), the disappearance of intelligence (p.50), and a decline in morality (p. 57). I am skeptical, as Thucydides does not include enough details about many incidents of stasis in his narrative. I think Price is guilty of believing Korkyra is exactly representative of every incident of stasis.

the result of external influence that heightens or creates internal divisions. Some incidents of stasis unite a combination of these factors.

Earlier staseis, unrelated to the Peloponnesian war, in some ways still align with Thucydides' Korkyrean model; they are caused by greed and personal ambition and they frequently divide a polis into two factions based on wealth or power (although not necessarily with specific reference to the terms oligarchs or democrats). In other respects, each is unique. Different incidents have internal or external origins, and the degree of violence is usually far less than that of Korkyra. Analysis of these pre-Korkyrean staseis reveals that Thucydides described these incidents in different terms than he did their later counterparts related to the Peloponnesian war. Pre-Korkyrean staseis were, like Korkyra, fought over power and influence, but without the context of a democratic-oligarchic divide. Thus, parties in these conflicts were not united by the same principles as later factions.

Analysis of Thucydides' descriptions of these incidents provides a historical backdrop against which to compare his later Korkyrean model of stasis, which he says engulfed the Greek world during the Peloponnesian War.

Prehistoric Stasis in Attica

Thucydides shows that stasis affects Greece throughout the entire course of its history; his first mention of the phenomenon occurs in the Archaeology, where he explains that, “on account of the excellence of the land, the power (δυνάμεις) of some was becoming greater, which brought about factional strife (στάσεις)” (1.2.4).³² This factionalism led to the growth of Athens,

³² διὰ γὰρ ἀρετὴν γῆς αἱ τε δυνάμεις τισὶ μείζους ἐγγιγνόμεναι στάσεις ἐνεποίουν (1.2.4).

since Attic soil was too poor for anyone to bother fighting over it.³³ As a result, “the most powerful having fallen out of the rest of Greece on account of war or factionalism (στάσει) withdrew to Athens as a safe place” (1.2.6).³⁴ This brief description of a land torn apart by stasis is much less detailed than the lengthy passage describing the dangers of stasis in book three. Nevertheless, Thucydides leaves a few clues about these early conflicts.

The differing quality of various plots of land in a settlement caused some individuals to be richer than others as their harvests were consistently more valuable. Greater wealth meant greater power. Power is a parallel theme in the Korkyrean civil war, which was fought—according to Thucydides’ analysis in 3.82—because of “desire for power (ἀρχή) on account of greediness and love of honor” (3.82.8).³⁵

Individuals in these early staseis fought over more nebulous ideas of power and influence than their later counterparts; at the same time, they fought for more tangible objectives. When quality land meant wealth and power, there were always those willing to take it by force. Later, in Korkyra, power and rule were not explicitly tied to particular pieces of land, but rather there existed systems of government that empowered different groups of people. Later, the democrats at Korkyra were not attacking the rich to seize their property, but to destroy the threat to popular control of the government. Economic motivation did drive some of the violence—Thucydides says some debtors killed their creditors (3.81.4)—but politics was the main cause.³⁶

³³ Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, I.2 (pp. 12-13) points out that this point relies on Thucydides’ previous argument that prehistoric stasis was caused by the quality of various plots of land, which is not drawn from archaeological evidence but his own experiences in the 5th century BCE. I disagree, cf. Hornblower, Simon. *A Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), I.4 (pp. 11-12).

³⁴ ἐκ γὰρ τῆς ἄλλης Ἑλλάδος οἱ πολέμῳ ἢ στάσει ἐκπίπτοντες παρ’ Ἀθηναίους οἱ δυνατότατοι ὡς βέβαιον ὄν ἀνεχώρουν (1.2.6).

³⁵ ἀρχὴ ἢ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν (3.82.8).

³⁶ Fuks, Alexander. “Thucydides and the Stasis in Korkyra.” *The American Journal of Philology* 92, no. 1 (January 1971): pp. 49-51.

Surely Thucydides intends this passage to be evidence supporting his later assertion that stasis will bring violence “as long as the nature of man is the same” (3.82.2).³⁷ However, there are several aspects of this passage that distinguish early staseis from later ones. In early staseis, the objective of each party was possession of valuable property. In the Korkyrean stasis, the objective of each party was the destruction of the other. Throughout 3.82, Thucydides shows that there were no real truces or agreements, no mercy for enemies, and no willingness to have meaningful negotiations.

Another possible interpretation of these disparities is that Thucydides, unaware of the real circumstances of prehistoric staseis, allows an anachronism, forcing his own understanding of the phenomenon onto those in the past. However, a more plausible interpretation is that Thucydides incorporated stasis into his narrative of the Archaeology to introduce the phenomenon that would be so widespread during his history.³⁸ This suits his own view that history repeats itself.

While Thucydides does not include similar details in 1.2, the information that he does include—that they were fought over the more fertile plots of land—indicates that combatants would have been more concerned with obtaining their enemies’ possessions than killing them. In addition, Thucydides mentions in 1.2.6 that Athens became a safe haven for refugees from the rest of Greece, which was constantly in turmoil because of these staseis. This brief statement reveals that in these early land conflicts, there were large numbers of survivors; enough that they “increased the previously large polity to such a multitude of persons in the city that finally there was not sufficient space in Attica and they sent colonies to Ionia” (1.2.6).³⁹

³⁷ ἕως ἄν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ (3.82.2).

³⁸ Hornblower, Simon. *A Commentary on Thucydides*, I.4 (pp. 11-12).

³⁹ καὶ πολῖται γιγνόμενοι εὐθὺς ἀπὸ παλαιοῦ μείζω ἔτι ἐποίησαν πλήθει ἀνθρώπων τὴν πόλιν, ὥστε καὶ ἐς Ἰωνίαν ὕστερον ὡς οὐχ ἰκανῆς οὖσης τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἀποικίας ἐξέπεμψαν (1.2.6).

While this example does not necessarily show a change in human nature, it does suggest that different circumstances have a large influence on the course of events in a stasis.

Prehistoric Stasis because of the Trojan War

Thucydides reinforces this concept when he describes another period of mass stasis in Greece. In 1.12, he describes how “the late return of the Hellenes from Ilium brought many revolutions, and civil strife (στάσεις) arose in many of the cities” (1.12.2).⁴⁰

Again, these conflicts were fought over land. The Greek soldiers who fought at Troy were away from home for over a decade; their lands either fell into disuse or were tended by others who surely felt they had some legal claim to them. The delayed return of these soldiers must have caused a great deal of conflict as they tried to reassert their claims to property now held by others who had worked it for years. The winners of these primary conflicts kept their land, while the losers were driven away: “those people having fallen out of these [conflicts] founded the cities” (1.12.2).⁴¹

However, these refugees started a secondary wave of conflicts, as they started land disputes elsewhere. Thucydides gives two examples. He says that “Sixty years after the capture of Troy the modern Boeotians were driven out of Arne by the Thessalians” (1.12.3)⁴², and that “in the eightieth year after [Troy] the Dorians and the Heraclids became masters of the Peloponnese” (1.12.3).⁴³

⁴⁰ ἢ τε γὰρ ἀναχώρησις τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐξ Ἰλίου χρονία γενομένη πολλὰ ἐνεόχμωσε, καὶ στάσεις ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐγίγνοντο (1.12.2).

⁴¹ ἀφ’ ὧν ἐκπίπτοντες τὰς πόλεις ἔκτιζον (1.12.2).

⁴² Βοιωτοὶ τε γὰρ οἱ νῦν ἐξηκοστῷ ἔτει μετὰ Ἰλίου ἄλωσιν ἐξ Ἄρνης ἀναστάντες ὑπὸ Θεσσαλῶν (1.12.3).

⁴³ Δωριῆς τε ὀγδοηκοστῷ ἔτει ξὺν Ἡρακλείδαις Πελοπόννησον ἔσχον (ibid.). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, I.12.2 (p. 37) thinks stasis is an inappropriate term for these conflicts, but I disagree. There is a violent internal struggle over power, which matches all other incidents of stasis in Thucydides’ work.

This passage is particularly relevant to the civil war at Korkyra because it not only describes a period of widespread stasis—albeit focused on land disputes—but also is related to a larger conflict, the Trojan War. Nevertheless, this wave of staseis is more closely related to earlier land disputes than the civil wars in Greece following that in Korkyra. The wartime context shared by both cases is less relevant than it first seems; in the Korkyrean wave of staseis, the presence of an ongoing war gave both parties the opportunity for outside alliances and assistance, as well as dividing the population of each polis into two distinct factions which supported each side. While the Trojan War may have served as a “violent teacher,” making individuals more willing to use violence to solve disputes, the fact remains that these conflicts were fought over land, which means that violence of the type that pervaded Korkyra was likely uncommon. The subsequent conflicts caused by large numbers of refugees throughout Greece prove that these staseis were not as murderous as those Thucydides describes in 3.82.

Prehistoric Stasis in Sparta

Later in the Archaeology Thucydides describes a stasis that differs from his first two examples. He claims that Lacedaemon “had nevertheless been divided by faction (στασιάσασα) for the longest time known” (1.18.1)⁴⁴ even though it “had good laws since very ancient times and was always free from tyranny” (1.18.1).⁴⁵ Whereas Thucydides previously used stasis to signify a violent land conflict that resulted in a winner keeping his choice of fertile land and a loser fleeing the area, this passage uses the term to signify a mere lack of unity in the Spartan state.

⁴⁴ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον στασιάσασα ὁμως ἐκ παλαιτάτου (1.18.1). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, I.18.1 (p.52) takes στασιάσασα to mean ‘unsettled’ in contrast with Sparta’s later state of good order (cp. ἡννομήθη). The phrases ὁμως ἐκ παλαιτάτου and ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον convince me that Sparta was somehow characterized by both *eunomia* and *stasis* (ἡννομήθη, στασιάσασα) simultaneously.

⁴⁵ ἡννομήθη καὶ αἰεὶ ἀτυράννευτος ἦν (ibid.).

The obvious example of factions in Sparta is the division between the Spartiates, the Perioikoi, and the helots. The subjugation of the helots was the most violent division in society, but also the youngest. The Spartiates and the helots were most similar to the oligarchs and democrats of the Korkyrean civil war, and the violence used to keep the helots enslaved resembles that between the two Korkyrean factions. However, the First Messenian War, which resulted in the enslavement of the Messenians, took place in the second half of the 8th century BCE. The divisions he refers to might be even older, hence his use of *παλαιτάτου* (1.18.1), the superlative form meaning ‘very ancient.’

Thucydides might also be referring to a division between the Spartan Homoioi and the Perioikoi, which dated back to the legendary reforms of Lycurgus. According to legend, Lycurgus established the Spartan constitution in the early years of the 8th century BCE; however, most likely these reforms gradually developed over the centuries after the Dorians populated the Peloponnese.⁴⁶ That Thucydides clearly considers this division within Spartan society worthy of the term ‘stasis’ is a notable decision, since Sparta does not share several of the main characteristics of stasis that he mentioned earlier. In 1.2 he notes that constantly shifting populations and conflicts over land prevented any “working in common” (1.3.1).⁴⁷ In 1.12 he describes how the years of stasis and conflict prevented any sort of stability or expansion (1.12.1), and how only after the population had settled and there were no staseis disrupting society could cities begin to send out colonies to Italy, Sicily, and the rest of Greece (1.12.4). Later in 1.18 he says that although Sparta was constantly in stasis from its founding to the

⁴⁶ A final possibility is the division between the two Spartan kings from different branches of the royal family.

⁴⁷ *κοινῇ ἐργασασμένη* (1.3.1).

beginning of the Peloponnesian war, “*on account of this* [system of government] it has been strong enough to influence even affairs in the other cities” (1.18.1).⁴⁸

Previously, Thucydides has shown that stasis has a paralyzing effect on a city; he will emphasize this theme throughout his work by showing numerous cities prevented from acting by internal conflict. But in this passage he shows that a good government can neutralize this effect.

The Spartan form of stasis is clearly distinct from not only the Korkyrean civil war, but also many other staseis that occurred in Greece. The factions it refers to are mostly nonviolent and have no effect on the city’s external effectiveness.

Kylonian Stasis

Thucydides mentions another ancient stasis occurring after the Kylonian conspiracy, where Kylon attempted to seize control of Athens and become a tyrant. Before even the Persian wars, the Spartans “ordered the Athenians to drive out the curse of the goddess” (1.126.2).⁴⁹ This curse was caused by the killing of a group of Kylon’s followers who had taken refuge in a sanctuary in ca. 625 BCE.⁵⁰ The accursed men who had killed the suppliants were driven out of Athens by Kleomenes and “Athenian faction members (στασιαζόντων)” (1.126.12).⁵¹ This episode reveals little about Thucydides’ views of stasis, but it is worth noting as it involves cooperation between Spartan forces and an Athenian faction, and resulted in the vanquished being driven from the city.

⁴⁸ δι’ αὐτὸ δυνάμενοι καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι καθίστασαν (1.18.1).

⁴⁹ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐκέλευον τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τὸ ἄγος ἐλαύνειν τῆς θεοῦ (1.126.12).

⁵⁰ Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p. 210). For more information about Thucydides’ treatment of the Cylonian conspiracy, see Rood, Tim. “The Cylon Conspiracy: Thucydides and Uses of the Past.” In *Thucydides Between History and Literature*, edited by Antonis Tsakmakis and Melina Tamiolaki, 119-38. Boston: De Gruyter, 2013.

⁵¹ μετὰ Ἀθηναίων στασιαζόντων (1.126.2).

Kolophonian Stasis

In book three Thucydides describes another pre-Korkyrean stasis, this time in Kolophon in 430 BCE.⁵² Paches, an Athenian officer, was sailing up the coast when he put in at Notion, where Thucydides says “the Kolophonians settled, the heights of the city [Kolophon] having been taken by Itamenes and by barbarians who had been brought in during a private stasis (στάσις)” (3.34.1).⁵³

Kolophon was located on the Ionian coast, where influence from the Persian Empire was inevitable. The Kolophonian stasis took place not between pro-Spartan and pro-Athenian parties, but between pro-Persian individuals Thucydides calls ‘medizers’ (3.34.2) and the rest of the populace. These medizers, desiring power, invited the Itamenes, a Persian,⁵⁴ into the city, which he swiftly seized.

By the time Paches arrived at Notion, where refugees from Kolophon had set up a new government, this city too was in stasis. The causes of this stasis are less clear, but Thucydides notes that members of one party “bringing in mercenaries from both Arcadia and from Pissouthnes [a Persian Satrap], were in a fortified place” (3.34.2).⁵⁵ Furthermore, “medizers from the heights of the city of the Kolophonians, joining them, set up a government” (3.34.2).⁵⁶ The opponents of this group, fleeing a second time from this new government, called in Paches (ibid.), who was able to restore Notion to pro-Grecian Kolophonians.

Similar to events at Korkyra, the stasis in Notion brought treachery and a decline in moral standards. Once called in to aid the pro-Greek faction, Paches “having called forth to a parley

⁵² Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, III.34 (p.141).

⁵³ κατόκητο Κολοφώνιοι τῆς ἄνω πόλεως ἐαλωκυίας ὑπὸ Ἰταμάνους καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων κατὰ στάσιν ἰδίαν ἐπαχθέντων (3.34.1). Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p.296), has ἰδία.

⁵⁴ Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc., pp. 415-416.

⁵⁵ οἱ μὲν παρὰ Πισσοῦθνου ἐπικούρους Ἀρκάδων τε καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐπαγαγόμενοι ἐν διατειχίσματι εἶχον (3.34.2).

⁵⁶ καὶ τῶν ἐκ τῆς ἄνω πόλεως Κολοφονίων οἱ μηδίσαντες ξυνεσελθόντες ἐπολίτευον (ibid.).

Hippias, [who was] holding power in the Arcadian fort, on the understanding that he would let him return safe and sound if he disliked his proposals” (3.34.3),⁵⁷ instead imprisoned him and attacked the fort, killing the Arcadians. He executed Hippias and restored Notion to the Kolophonians, expelling the pro-Persian faction.

Since Paches killed pro-Persian Greeks, his actions brought less moral outrage than the comparatively intrafamilial violence in Korkyra. Thucydides apparently thinks little of this conflict, a remnant of the Persian wars in the early years of the Peloponnesian War. The treacherous style of fighting resembles that at Korkyra, but on the whole the conflict has different origins. The Persians created the external pressure necessary for stasis, and the factions in Kolophon and Notion were not fighting for the destruction of their enemies, but were content to drive them from the city in their fight for power.⁵⁸ It was Athens that caused the deaths of enemy faction. The situation deteriorated until external support in the form of an Athenian army concluded the violence.

Stasis in Plataea and Thebes

In the Plataean debate, Thucydides refers back to earlier times of stasis during the Persian wars and the Pentekontaetia. He has the speakers at this debate reveal details about how foreign influence can cause stasis. The Thebans, arguing against the Plataeans on trial with the Spartans, mention the phenomenon both directly and indirectly. They castigate the Plataeans for claiming “they alone of the Boiotians did not medize” (3.62.1)⁵⁹ during the Persian Wars when they were

⁵⁷ ὁ δὲ προκαλεσάμενος ἐς λόγους Ἰππίαν τῶν ἐν τῷ διατειχίσματι Ἀρκάδων ἄρχοντα, ὥστε, ἦν μηδὲν ἀρέσκον λέγει, πάλιν αὐτὸν καταστήσειν ἐς τὸ τεῖχος σῶν καὶ ὑγιᾶ (3.34.3).

⁵⁸ Hornblower notes that Aristotle saw this stasis as a purely internal conflict (*Politics*, 1313b10), but believes that the violence was driven by external influence (Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p 416). I agree.

⁵⁹ μόνοι Βοιωτῶν οὐ μηδίσαι (3.62.1). Colin Macleod notes that this is incorrect, the Thespians also did not medize (Macleod, Colin. “Thucydides’ Plataean Debate.” In *Collected Essays of Colin Macleod*, edited by Barbara Macleod, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 106).

the “only Boiotians that atticized” (3.62.2)⁶⁰ when the Athenians attacked only recently. As Thucydides has shown, medizing or atticizing can be understood as an act of stasis. Different groups in a city have more or less to lose by allowing an enemy army to enter. When the Thebans accuse the Plataeans of ‘atticizing,’ they mean that the Athenian faction within the city was able to exert enough influence over the government to ensure the city sided with Athens. Thucydides gives no further details about this process, so any events in Plataea during the Persian wars are not useful in analyzing Thucydides’ characterization of stasis in his work.

However, the Thebans describe how their “city being governed at that time happened to be governed neither by an oligarchy with equal rights nor by a democracy” (3.62.3)⁶¹ but instead “a narrow oligarchy (δυναστεία) of a few men held power” (3.62.3).⁶² These few, they continue, “expecting that their private power might be greater if the Persian were victorious, holding the masses by force they brought him [the Persian] in” (3.62.4).⁶³ Thucydides does not use the word ‘stasis,’ but there are two factors that make this episode part of his stasis model.

First, he describes a conflict that exactly resembles other staseis he has related. The arrival of the Persian army deepened divisions in Theban society and offered an opportunity for those hungry for power to seize it. A corrupt dynasty, seeking to gain even more power, seized the opportunity provided by the Persian army. Second, he is relating the words of the Thebans, who are not speaking in the same style as he is. That this incident is reported by the Thebans and not Thucydides himself does not disqualify it from analysis as part of his narrative; since he would have known about the events of the Persian war as an educated Athenian, events in

⁶⁰ ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας μόνους αὖ Βοιωτῶν ἀττικίσει (3.62.2).

⁶¹ ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἢ πόλις τότε ἐτύγχανεν οὔτε κατ’ ὀλιγαρχίαν ἰσόνομον πολιτεύουσα οὔτε κατὰ δημοκρατίαν (3.62.3).

⁶² δυναστεία ὀλίγων ἀνδρῶν (3.62.3).

⁶³ καὶ οὗτοι ἰδίας δυνάμεις ἐλπίσαντες ἔτι μᾶλλον σήσειεν εἰ τὰ τοῦ Μήδου κρατήσειε, κατέχοντες ἰσχύϊ τὸ πλῆθος ἐπηγάγοντο αὐτόν (3.62.4).

Plataea and the rest of Greece during the Persian wars would have affected his understanding of politics and stasis especially. Thus it merits a place alongside the rest of the staseis he includes.

In the same speech the Thebans also accuse the Athenians of taking advantage of stasis to take control of much of their country: “it is necessary to look at how, with the Athenians attacking the rest of Greece and trying to take our land for themselves, and already having much of it because of faction (στάσις)...” (3.62.5).⁶⁴ The Thebans do not go into detail about their problem with stasis; however the important elements are present. The aggression of Athens caused a division in Theban society, which led to the paralysis of the city to the point where it could not defend its own territory.

Furthermore, Thebes attacks Plataea in the first place because of stasis: Thucydides says that they were invited into the city by a faction of the rich and wealthiest (3.65.3). There is little other evidence about this event, but it provides another example of an oligarchic faction attempting to call in external allies and gain power.

One final point harkens back to events predating the Plataean debate itself. When a Theban army was attacking Plataea, the Plataeans and Thebans negotiated a deal that if the Theban army left, then the Plataeans would release their Theban prisoners. The Thebans retreated, but the Plataeans executed their prisoners (3.66). This treachery is a notable example of the deceit which Thucydides has assigned to stasis—except in this case it occurred under different circumstances.⁶⁵

The Plataean debate raises questions about the freedom of cities divided by stasis or those under pressure from an invader. Both the Thebans and the Plataeans play down their own choice

⁶⁴ σκέψασθαι χρῆ, Ἀθηναίων ὕστερον ἐπιόντων τὴν τε ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν χώραν πειρωμένων ὑφ’ αὐτοῖς ποιεῖσθαι καὶ κατὰ στάσις ἤδη ἐχόντων αὐτῆς τὰ πολλὰ (3.62.5).

⁶⁵ Macleod, “Thucydides’ Plataean Debate,” pp. 108-9.

in deciding which side to ally themselves with—the Thebans with the Persians in 3.62.4 and the Plataeans with the Athenians in 3.55.4.⁶⁶

In these two episodes the Thebans reveal plenty of information about the staseis that affected them. They were externally motivated; it took an enemy army to bring about actual conflict that would lead to the second critical component, paralysis. There are no details about the duration of these staseis or the degree of violence—though the Thebans suggest that ‘ἰσχύς’ (force) was involved. Thucydides only mentions singular efforts by one party to bring in aid to seize power, instead of continual plotting by both sides. The characteristics of these staseis are similar to many others that Thucydides describes.

Stasis in Sicily

Factionalism plays a large role in the Athenian invasion of Sicily. On several occasions leaders of the Sicilians discuss the threat or history of stasis in their country. Since these discussions of stasis do not occur in the context which Thucydides describes in 3.82—rival efforts to call in the Athenians or Spartans—and frequently refer to incidents occurring before the Peloponnesian war or discussions of stasis as a concept, they do not belong in a discussion of the staseis that Thucydides says followed Korkyra.

In 4.61 Thucydides describes a meeting of Sicilian cities, where Hermokrates warns other Sicilian representatives that it is important “to recognize that factionalism (στάσιν) most greatly destroys cities and Sicily” (4.61.1).⁶⁷ Thucydides gives little context for this statement, but after the narrative of the Korkyrean stasis there is no need to elaborate.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

⁶⁷ νομίσαι τε στάσιν μάλιστα φθείρειν τὰς πόλεις καὶ τὴν Σικελίαν (4.61.1).

In 6.5.1 Thucydides mentions that the town of Himera was partially colonized by “Syracusan refugees having been defeated in a civil war (στάσει)” (6.5.1).⁶⁸ This brief reference is not very important, but reinforces the fact that in many cases defeated factions fled their cities instead of being killed.

Later, while discussing the Athenian invasion of Sicily the Syracusan Athenagoras says that Syracuse “is rarely at rest, but is subject to constant factions (στάσεις) and contests not more frequently against enemies than against itself” (6.38.3)⁶⁹ as a result of its tendency to ignore internal problems and not take action when it learns of them (6.38.3). Thucydides does not provide any context about staseis in Syracuse, but Athenagoras goes on to add that the city suffers from τυραννίδας (tyrannies) and δυναστείας ἀδίκους (unjust oligarchies), all of which can occur as the result of stasis. This reference to stasis occurs in the direct speech of Athenagoras and provides no other information about the details of these conflicts.

Nonetheless, from the few details given it is clear that stasis in Syracuse arises naturally from private greed and ambition, and has little to do with external influence. Athenagoras clearly considers stasis an expected occurrence in Syracuse. There are no details about the level of violence that these staseis entail, but the comparison to wars against external enemies suggests that they are not bloodless.

Another stasis occurred during the Sicilian expedition when a conspiracy arose to call in the Athenians in Messena (6.74). Alcibiades gave information to an anti-Athenian group, who

⁶⁸ καὶ ἐκ Συρακουσῶν φυγάδες στάσει νικηθέντες (6.5.1).

⁶⁹ στάσεις δὲ πολλὰς καὶ ἀγῶνας οὐ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους πλέονας ἢ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀναιρεῖται (6.38.3). While the Athenians were still deciding whether to invade Sicily, Alcibiades recommended the expedition on the grounds that all the Sicilians were in stasis (στασιάζουσιν, 6.17.4).

“had before killed those men [those supporting the Athenians] and were then in a faction (στασιάζοντες)” (6.74.1).⁷⁰

In 7.33 there is another stasis anecdote, where an anti-Athenian faction is driven out of Thourii in a civil war (7.33.5). In contrast with Messena, where one faction eliminated the other, in Thourii they merely expelled them from the city.

In 7.46 Thucydides mentions that the Syracusans sent ships to reinforce an anti-Athenian faction in Akragas, which was in civil war. Akragas had previously been neutral (7.33.2)⁷¹ but apparently had been divided into factions over which side to take in the conflict. Eventually Thucydides reports that “the faction (στάσις) friendly to the Syracusans was driven out” (7.50.1).⁷²

In the episodes listed in this chapter, Thucydides describes a number of staseis that occur before the Peloponnesian War, or with different origins than the Spartan-Athenian divide. In ancient times, factions fought over wealth and power, just as in later years. In most cases they were content to allow their defeated enemies to flee, as they were only interested in plunder and riches, not murder. Thucydides also uses the term stasis referring to divided societies such as Sparta, not just those actively fighting one another.

IV. Stasis in Contexts similar to that of Korkyra

The rest of the incidents of stasis in Thucydides’ work occur in a similar context as the Korkyrean stasis. Conflicts in this category take advantage of the existing divide between Sparta and Athens. Several incidents take place before the Korkyrean stasis, and one even before the war broke out. These can be understood in terms of Thucydides’ Korkyrean model because they

⁷⁰ οἱ δὲ τούτῃ τε ἀνδρᾶς διέφθειραν πρότερον καὶ τότε στασιάζοντες (6.74.1).

⁷¹ Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, VII.32.1 (p.412).

⁷² ἢ τοῖς Συρακοσίοις στάσις [ἐς] φιλία ἐξεπεπτώκει (7.50.1).

have arisen together with the conflict between the democrats and oligarchs, which Thucydides says inspired staseis after Korkyra (3.82.1).

Surprisingly, many of these staseis occur under different circumstances than at Korkyra, where an initial conspiracy developed into an all-out civil war. Many staseis are the results of plots to bring in either the Athenians or the Spartans, but these plots themselves do not constitute a stasis; it is only when the city itself is openly struggling against itself that a stasis has occurred. In this aspect many incidents are different from Korkyra, with a stasis appearing that does not devolve to any terrible degree of violence, or a stasis not developing until an enemy army reaches the city gates and demands to be let in.

The details that Thucydides includes in his narratives of these staseis reveal a great diversity in these events. This diversity, combined with Thucydides' analysis of the conflict at Korkyra, gives insight into how and why Thucydides chose Korkyra as the centerpiece of his stasis model and the location of one of his few personal authorial moral interjections.

Stasis in Samos

Thucydides includes a brief narrative of the Samian revolution of 441-440 BCE.⁷³ While he does not use the term stasis to describe the situation, he clearly considers the Samian revolution to be the result of stasis. Thucydides explains that when a war broke out between Samos and Miletus, the Milesians sent an embassy to Athens to condemn the Samians, and, “they were aided also by some private individuals from Samos desiring to overthrow the government,” (1.115.2).⁷⁴ This description of a faction of Samians exactly matches many of Thucydides' other passages of stasis.

⁷³ Date from Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, I.115.2 (p.188).

⁷⁴ ξυνεπελάβοντο δὲ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς Σάμου ἄνδρες ἰδιῶται νεωτερίσαι βουλόμενοι τὴν πολιτείαν (1.115.2).

Athens was able to send a force to Samos and install a democracy, but yet another faction overthrew this new government: “for certain men of the Samians were not staying behind, but fled to the mainland, allying with the most powerful of the men in the city and Pissouthnes son of Hystaspes...and first they rose against the people and overthrew the majority, then...they revolted” (1.115.4-5).⁷⁵ The revolt ended with a nine-month siege and Samian surrender to Athenian imperial authority. Thucydides does not report any particularly harsh terms of surrender; the Samians had to tear down their walls, hand over hostages and ships, and pay war retributions. Instead of the brutal treatment of later revolutionaries like those at Mytilene, these defeated enemies are granted mercy and allowed to live.

This incident occurred long before the Korkyrean stasis, but already Thucydides has introduced elements of his stasis model that become more common later on. In fact, the Samian revolution very closely resembles the Korkyrean stasis: both conflicts had long duration and caused several violent clashes. If this stasis had occurred after the declaration of war in 431 BCE, it is possible that Thucydides would have centered his stasis model around this conflict instead of Korkyra. However, this episode takes place during 440 BCE, in one of the final chapters of his narrative of the Pentekontaetia. It succinctly summarizes one of the final pre-war challenges to Athenian imperial power.

Stasis at Epidamnos

After completing his Archaeology of Greece, Thucydides begins to narrate the events of the Peloponnesian War itself. He begins by describing a conflict between Corinth and Korkyra over Epidamnos, a colony of Korkyra. This conflict arose, he says, because of a stasis in

⁷⁵ τῶν δὲ Σαμίων ἦσαν γὰρ τινες οἱ οὐχ ὑπέμειναν, ἀλλ' ἔφυγον εἰς τὴν ἡπειρον, ζυυθόμενοι τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει τοῖς δυνατωτάτοις καὶ Πισσοῦθνη τῷ Ὑστάσπου ξυμμαχίαν, ὃς ...καὶ πρῶτον μὲν τῷ δήμῳ ἐπανεστήσαν καὶ ἐκράτησαν τῶν πλείστων, ἔπειτα...ἀπέστησαν (1.115.4-5).

Epidamnos: “Being in conflict (στασιάσαντες) amongst themselves for many years, it is said, on account of a war with some of their neighboring barbarians, they were ruined and were deprived of the bulk of their power” (1.24.4).⁷⁶ It is worth noting that Thucydides attributes the beginning of actual Peloponnesian War to this event, a stasis in Epidamnos.⁷⁷

The circumstances of this stasis distinguish it from both the Korkyrean stasis and the historical staseis in Thucydides’ *Archaeology*. In Epidamnos, as in Korkyra, there was both a democratic party and an oligarchic aristocratic party. However, in this conflict, the democratic party struck first and “expelled the powerful” (1.24.5).⁷⁸ Thucydides here uses δυνατούς, which implies in this context that the dispute was not over the form of government of Epidamnos, as in Korkyra, but rather over wealth and influence. While in Korkyra, the democrats fought the oligarchs over the idea that the government would be in the hands of a few, in Epidamnos, the conflict was just between those individuals who happened to have power and those who did not. Thucydides shows that while this stasis was fought between parties that resembled those in Korkyra, the subject of their quarrel was different.

After this expulsion, “those who had been expelled along with barbarians ransacked those in the city on both land and sea” (1.24.5).⁷⁹ The elites of Epidamnos, not willing to give up their privileged position in the city, allied themselves with neighboring barbarians and began to attack the city. In addition, they traveled to Korkyra, where they asked their allies in their mother city to restore them (1.26.3). The democrats in the city also sent to Korkyra for aid in defending themselves, events which began the larger conflict of the Peloponnesian war.

⁷⁶ στασιάσαντες δὲ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἔτη πολλά, ὡς λέγεται, ἀπὸ πολέμου τινὸς τῶν προσοίκων βαρβάρων ἐφθάρησαν καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως τῆς πολλῆς ἐστερήθησαν. (1.24.4).

⁷⁷ Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, I.24.1 (p. 68).

⁷⁸ ἐξεδίωξε τοὺς δυνατούς (1.24.5).

⁷⁹ οἱ δὲ ἐπελθόντες μετὰ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐλήζοντο τοὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει κατὰ τε γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν (1.24.5).

Another notable point of this passage is that Thucydides describes Epidamnos as “divided by faction (στασιάσαντες) for many years” (1.24.4),⁸⁰ despite the fact that the friction between the two factions in the city only deteriorated into open violence after the democrats expelled the elites from the city. After this, Thucydides calls the conflict a “πόλεμος” (war). This is distinct from his other passages later in the work, where he refers to internal conflicts as staseis, regardless of the level of violence. It is possible that he refers to the conflict between the democrats of Epidamnos and the alliance of elites and barbarians as a war because of the involvement of the barbarians, but later in his work he refers to similarly ‘internationalized’ civil wars as stasis.

Stasis in Athens

In the first year of the Peloponnesian War, King Archidamos of Sparta led an invasion of Attica to plunder the region. He made his camp near Acharnai, near the city of Athens proper. He chose this place for his camp because the Acharnians, “being a large portion of the city (for they numbered three thousand hoplites)” (2.20.4),⁸¹ would be loath to allow their property outside the city walls to be destroyed. Archidamos correctly reasoned that “if the Athenians did not come out and fight against the attack in that area [Acharnai], then without fear he might assault the rest of plain and attack the city itself” (2.20.4).⁸² Furthermore, “the Acharnians, having been robbed of their own things, would not be equally zealous to take action on behalf of the property of others and there would be factionalism (στάσιν) in their counsels” (2.20.4).⁸³ His plan worked to

⁸⁰ στασιάσαντες δὲ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἔτη πολλά (1.24.4).

⁸¹ Ἀχαρνῆς μέγα μέρος ὄντες τῆς πόλεως (τρισχίλιοι γὰρ ὀπλίται ἐγένοντο) (2.20.4). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, II.22.1 (pp. 273-4) remarks that the figure 3,000 is too large, calculating that they had at most 1,100 hoplites. He suggests that Thucydides meant πολῖται, which would make 3,000 a more accurate figure.

⁸² εἴ τε καὶ μὴ ἐπεξέλθοιεν ἐκείνη τῇ ἐσβολῇ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀδεέστερον ἤδη ἐς τὸ ὕστερον τό τε πεδῖον τεμεῖν καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν πόλιν χωρήσεσθαι.

⁸³ τοὺς γὰρ Ἀχαρνεῆας ἐστερημένους τῶν σφετέρων οὐχ ὁμοίως προθύμους ἔσεσθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων κινδυνεύειν, στάσιν δ’ ἐνέσεσθαι τῇ γνώμῃ (2.20.4).

a degree; Athens faced mild disorder, and Pericles sent out cavalry patrols, one of which was defeated, giving the Spartans their first victory of the war (2.22.1).

This stasis is nonviolent. The dissension that Archidamos brings to Athenian politics is not a bloody conflict such as famous staseis like Korkyra. Thucydides mentions that groups in Athens formed and argued over what to do, he says that they were “formed in groups (ξυστάσεις) in much strife” (2.21.3).⁸⁴ Archidamos proved prescient as the Acharnians, “thinking along the lines that they themselves were not the smallest portion of the Athenians, as it was their own land that was threatened, were the most in favor of a sortie” (2.21.3).⁸⁵

Archidamos did not want a change in Athenian leadership, only a disintegration of Athenian unity. Dissension would paralyze Athens, as Thucydides has shown stasis to do, allowing Archidamos and his army greater freedom in Attica without the threat of an Athenian army at full strength. Unfortunately for him, Pericles proved skillful enough to prevent the division from coming to open violence. Thucydides divides this portion of the narrative of the Spartan invasion into two sections. The first part, in 2.20, summarizes Archidamos’ frame of mind and strategy for inducing stasis into Athenian politics. The second section, 2.21, describes the actual effect of his operations.⁸⁶ The contrast between ξυστάσις and στάσις becomes clear; although the city is divided, Pericles is able to keep control of the city. Thucydides’ use of ξυστάσις indicates the degree which a division in a city must reach before it can be a στάσις.

⁸⁴ κατὰ ξυστάσεις τε γιγνόμενοι ἐν πολλῇ ἔριδι ἦσαν (2.21.3). Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p. 75) comments that these are informal groups and meetings. In stasis, parties are more formalized.

⁸⁵ οἱ τε Ἀχαρνῆς οἴομενοι παρὰ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἐλαχίστην μοῖραν εἶναι Ἀθηναίων, ὡς αὐτῶν ἡ γῆ ἐτέμνετο, ἐνήγον τὴν ἐξοδὸν μάλιστα (2.21.3). In Gomme’s view, Archidamos’ plan was tactically ineffectual, since the Acharnians remained “as warlike and as hostile to any compromise with the Spartans as ever.” (Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc, p. 74) Regardless of the tactical efficacy of the scheme, Thucydides shows that it was successful to some degree in creating stasis, even if that stasis did not devolve to the desired degree.

⁸⁶ On this narrative see Hunter, Virginia. *Thucydides: The Artful Reporter* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), pp. 11-21.

Athens has not met the criteria for a full στάσις, perhaps because this ‘dissension’ is not the result of a desire for ἀρχή or any greater wealth; the Acharnian faction in Athens has simply lost its motivation to fight alongside the rest of the city. By destroying Acharnian lands, Archidamos created a division between Athenians with nothing more to lose (ὥς αὐτῶν ἡ γῆ ἐτέμνετο, 2.21.3) and those who still had property to defend. This division is unrelated to the causes of the staseis at Korkyra.

Furthermore, this stasis could only occur because of external circumstances; without the threat and manipulation of Archidamos and his army, there would be no disagreement in Athens. Thucydides describes earlier staseis in the same way he describes the plague: an event that is endogenous to the city where it arises. Here he portrays the Athenian stasis as a division created by external circumstances. The stasis in Korkyra likewise is caused by external influences, and Thucydides confirms that the wave of staseis that swept through Greece after Korkyra was also caused or facilitated by the division between pro-Spartan and pro-Athenian factions in the cities. However, this stasis in Athens is worth examining because while other staseis may have been caused by the ongoing war, this particular division only arose because of the threat of a Spartan army only a few miles away. The immediate presence of enemy forces created a division in the city between those who had more to lose and less to lose because of a certain course of action—in this case offering battle. In later examples of stasis these actions differ, but there is a clear distinction between staseis caused by the larger war in general and those caused by the arrival of an enemy force.

Stasis in Larisa

In 2.22.3 Thucydides uses *στάσις* with a different meaning. Recounting Thessalian assistance to Athens during the first Spartan invasion, he describes two Larisan commanders, Polymedes and Aristonous, as *ἀπὸ τῆς στάσεως ἑκάτερος*, (2.22.3), or ‘each from a party.’ This comment implies that the city of Larisa is in *στάσις* (factional conflict), since there are two *στάσεις* (parties). It is remarkable that the city of Larisa was able to unite to the degree that it could send aid to Athens, under the command of two leaders from different parties. This belies the image Thucydides has created of cities paralyzed with infighting. Furthermore, this episode shows that stasis before Korkyra was not necessarily brutal and violent.

Stasis in Mytilene

Thucydides also suggests that stasis played a part in the Mytilenian revolt in book three. He says that the Tenedians, the Methymnians and “men of the Mytilenians who were in a faction (*στάσιν*) on a private basis” (3.2.3)⁸⁷ gave the Athenians advance warning that the cities of Lesbos were “pressing on to a revolution (*ἀποστάσει*)” (3.2.3).⁸⁸ Because of this warning the Athenians were able to launch a preventative attack on Mytilene. This mention of stasis contrasts with many others in Thucydides’ work. On Lesbos, a faction exists when it reveals the majority’s plans to revolt from Athens. In most other examples that Thucydides gives, the faction arises to advocate for revolution. In addition, there is no violence involved, only an unauthorized communication.

⁸⁷ καὶ αὐτῶν Μυτιληναίων ἰδίᾳ ἄνδρες κατὰ στάσιν (3.2.3). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p. 383) takes *κατὰ στάσιν* to mean “of the opposite faction” and notes that Aristotle (*Politics* 1304a4ff) attributes this stasis to a dispute between two individuals over women (which gives Thucydides a good reason for using *ἰδίᾳ*).

⁸⁸ ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει ἐπείγονται (3.2.3).

Stasis in Rhegium

In the opening lines of Book 4, Thucydides mentions a stasis occurring simultaneously (and possibly even before) the stasis at Korkyra. He says that “for Rhegium for a long time was in stasis (ἔστασίαζε), and was powerless in their present situation to ward off the Lokrians, who were attacking even more” (4.1.3).⁸⁹

Thucydides does not reveal whether the Rhegian stasis was occurring because of the Peloponnesian war, or whether this is another example of a civil war carried out for personal gain unrelated to the Spartan-Athenian conflict. But again he is consistent in showing how stasis paralyzed, or at the very least weakened, a city. In addition, he mentions that the Lokrians invade Rhegium partially because they were “being invited in by Rhegian refugees” (4.1.3).⁹⁰ The Lokrians also hoped to prevent the Rhegians from aiding the Messenians in Sicily, who were revolting from Athens (4.1.1).

Rhegium was allied with Athens, and harbored democratic Messenian refugees. Messena, Thucydides says, had invited Syracuse and Lokris in to help them defect. In order to prevent Rhegium from sending assistance to a democratic faction in Messena, Lokris kept Rhegium occupied by ravaging its territory.

Thucydides does not describe the situation in Messena as a stasis. However, what he describes resembles stasis in so far as the city has invited a foreign power to help it break free of an alliance with Athens, and moreover, the fight over this defection was lengthy enough that Lokris was able to raise a force and carry out operations to support one of the factions.

⁸⁹ τὸ γὰρ Ῥήγιον ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἐστασίαζε καὶ ἀδύνατα ἦν ἐν τῷ παρόντι τοὺς Λοκροὺς ἀμύνεσθαι, ἧ καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπετίθεντο. (4.1.3).

⁹⁰ ξυνεπαγόντων Ῥηγίωνων φυγάδων (ibid.).

Stasis at Megara

Thucydides devotes a long passage to a stasis in Megara in 424 BCE. Originally, Megara had been in turmoil from a stasis in 427 BCE, the same year as the Korkyrean stasis. In this original stasis, the popular faction had been victorious and expelled the oligarchs. Here Thucydides refers to the popular faction as *πλῆθος*, instead of *δῆμος*. This nomenclature suggests that the factions in the Megarian stasis were divided along slightly different lines than the obvious oligarchic-democratic schism.⁹¹ Thucydides gives one clue in 3.51, where he describes an Athenian expedition that seized Minoa, an island fort, from the Megarians. Soon after this humiliation, the *πλῆθος* revolted and expelled the oligarchs,⁹² perhaps more for their incompetence than for any ideological differences.⁹³

Whatever the case, Megara did not side with Athens, the democratic power, after this stasis. Thucydides says that the city was “under pressure from the Athenians in the war, who were invading their land twice every year” (4.66.1).⁹⁴ In addition, the exiles that had been driven from the city in 427 BCE, now based at Pagai, were fighting as raiders and brigands (*ληστεύοντες*). By 424 BCE the threat of war on two fronts led moderate Megarians to suggest recalling the exiles, and the remaining allies of the oligarchs added their voices to this proposal. The democratic leaders of the city feared that the returning oligarchs would attempt to regain their power. Support for the democracy was far from certain; the shaky government rested only

⁹¹ Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, IV.66.1 (p.528) says that the people in 427 BCE were more “patriotic than loyal to party,” an excellent contrast with the later stasis in 424 BCE.

⁹² Those expelled were the extreme oligarchs; their more moderate allies remained in the city and still had a voice in public affairs (Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p.231.)).

⁹³ Puckett, Scott. “Stasis in the Ancient Greek Historians.” PhD diss., Tulane University, 2013, p. 178.

⁹⁴ οἱ ἐν τῇ πόλει πιεζόμενοι ὑπὸ τε Ἀθηναίων τῷ πολέμῳ, αἰεὶ κατὰ ἔτος ἕκαστον δις ἐσβαλλόντων πανστρατιᾶ ἐς τὴν χώραν (4.66.1).

on continued safety, and already “the people did not have the strength to be steadfast to them [the democratic leaders] on account of the evils” (4.66.3)⁹⁵ they had suffered.

The democratic leaders thus decided to invite Athens into the city. Their logic was sound; as leaders of a democratic faction, they could reasonably expect to remain in power in Megara, even under Athenian hegemony. However, the returning oligarchs would surely learn from their counterparts in Korkyra and try to convince Megara’s Peloponnesian allies to oust the democratic government.

This sequence of events is characteristic of the incidents of stasis that Thucydides says followed Korkyra. However, the only instance in this passage where he describes the situation as a stasis is when he refers to the original conflict that caused the expulsion of the oligarchs. When he narrates the invitation of the Athenian generals, he does not use the common ἐπάγω, meaning ‘to bring on,’ but uses ποιοῦνται λόγους. (4.66.3). Thucydides’ narrative technique is the cause for this second irregularity; in this passage he is describing in detail the scheme to bring in the Athenians, and thus has no need to use the more general term. However, the non-appearance of στάσις is noteworthy.

The ensuing violence in Megara was neither as pervasive nor as lengthy as in Korkyra, but it was just as inventive; the democrats killed the guards at the city gate while a boat was passing through at night, allowing a small Athenian force hidden nearby to rush through and enter the city while a larger force gathered outside (4.68.3). This clever plan is one concrete example supporting Thucydides’ claim that later factions devised clever stratagems to seize power.

At dawn, seeing an Athenian army outside their gates, the Megarians prepared to march out for battle. The conspirators planned to let the Athenian army into the city when the gates

⁹⁵ οὐ δυνατὸν τὸν δῆμον ἐσόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν κακῶν μετὰ σφῶν καρτερεῖν (4.66.3).

were opened. However, one of the conspirators, fearing for his own safety in the battle that would necessarily follow, exposed the plot, leaving the Athenian army stranded outside. The Athenian generals turned their attention to Nisaea, which still held Peloponnesian troops originally intended to keep Megara from defecting, and began siege operations; they soon seized it.

The Spartiate Brasidas happened to be nearby and raised a force of Peloponnesian allies to defend Nisaea. He raced ahead of the main army and reached Megara undetected by the Athenians with a force of three hundred men (4.70). Upon his arrival Megara was once again divided into factions—here Thucydides writes “αἱ δὲ τῶν Μεγαρέων στάσεις” (4.71.1), the only time in this episode. In contrast to other circumstances, here ‘στάσεις’ refers to the factions themselves instead of the state of stasis. However, the use of this term to refer to the divided groups of the city instead of ‘δῆμος,’ ‘δυνατοί,’ or ‘πλήθος,’ suggests Thucydides considered Megara to be in stasis.

The arrival of Brasidas with the promise of a Peloponnesian army counterbalanced the Athenian threat to Megara. However, it did little to end the division within the city. The democratic leaders refused to let Brasidas into Megara, fearing that he would recall the oligarchic exiles to ensure that Megara would remain loyal to Sparta. The friends of the oligarchic exiles had the most to gain from Brasidas and a new oligarchic government. However, they feared that the democrats would incite the δῆμος to kill them in retribution for overthrowing the democracy. In addition, both parties anticipated a battle between Brasidas and the Athenian force, and thus decided to await the outcome of the battle before deciding whom to support. Neither side allowed Brasidas into the city, until after a few days the Athenians refused battle and retreated into Nisaea, leaving Brasidas the victor. Afterwards, the friends of the oligarchic

exiles brought him into the city. Later, the Megarians who had conspired with Athens fled, and the oligarchic exiles returned to the city (4.74.2). The Megarians established an extreme oligarchy, which Thucydides says lasted for longer than any other revolutionary government (4.74).⁹⁶

At Megara, both factions had three years of awareness of earlier events at Korkyra, whose origins were somewhat similar. The internal balance of power at Korkyra quickly shifted with the arrival of an Athenian or Spartan fleet. At Megara, the democratic leaders faced a loss of control when Brasidas arrived at the city with his army close behind him. Despite comparable circumstances, the stasis at Megara never devolved to a Korkyrean level of violence beyond the original attempt to bring the Athenians into the city, and the guilty conspirators were able to escape the city with their lives. However, Thucydides does show how the plotting factions use clever tricks to get allies, and the rival factions are ready and willing to kill each other, until Brasidas arrives and is able to somewhat defuse the situation, like Pericles when Archidamos laid waste to Acharnai. The paranoia shown by the conspirators recalls Thucydides' comments in 3.82. Here at least is one episode confirming his judgments there.

Subversive Campaigns

Perhaps learning from the possibilities of the incident at Megara, both the Athenians and the Spartans engaged in a series of civil conflicts later in the summer of 424 BCE. Thucydides reports that Demosthenes, the Athenian general who had attempted to take Megara, immediately withdrew from the city and sailed to Naupaktos. He intended to support pro-Athenian factions in Boiotia and help certain men in the cities, “who were desiring to change the order [of

⁹⁶ Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p. 244) clarifies that it is unknown how long this government actually lasted.

government] and turn it toward a democracy just as the Athenians had” (4.76.2).⁹⁷ Thucydides does not call these ‘certain men’ (τινων ἀνδρῶν) *stasiotai*, but his description of their plotting to use Athenian force to bring themselves to power in their cities matches exactly his description in 3.82.1 of such schemes.

This Boiotian conspiracy was led by exiles from several cities, who hoped not only to restore their fortunes but also to seize power for themselves. The conspirators planned to betray Siphai and Chaironeia while Athens seized Delion on an appointed day, so no city could reinforce another. The plan was not a complete success; the Boeotians learned of the plot and fought several battles against Athenian forces (4.89-97).

On the Peloponnesian side of the war, Brasidas also embarked on a campaign of subversion immediately after Megara. Several cities in Thrace had revolted from Athens, and more were conspiring against Athens secretly (4.79.2). These cities asked Sparta for assistance and offered to support the Peloponnesian army, since they were “summoning them to support their revolution (ἀποστάσει)” (4.80.1).⁹⁸

Thucydides reports that Brasidas was Sparta’s first choice for this mission, as “showing himself just and moderate toward the cities he subverted many, and seized places by treachery” (4.81.2).⁹⁹ His objectives were almost identical to the Athenians’ in Boiotia: support any revolutions against Athens in Thrace and convince as many cities as possible to switch sides.

Brasidas “immediately campaigned against Akanthos” (4.84.1),¹⁰⁰ and his arrival threw the city into stasis (ἐστασίαζον).¹⁰¹ Thucydides records Brasidas’ address to the Akanthians, and

⁹⁷ ἐπράσσετε, βουλομένων μεταστῆσαι τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐς δημοκρατίαν ὥσπερ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τρέψαι (4.76.2).

⁹⁸ ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει σφῶς ἐπικαλουμένων (4.80.1).

⁹⁹ ἑαυτὸν παρασχὼν δίκαιον καὶ μέτριον ἐς τὰς πόλεις ἀπέστησε τὰ πολλά, τὰ δὲ προδοσίᾳ εἴλε τῶν χωρίων (4.81.2). Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p. 270) points out the contrast between Brasidas’ moderation and his seizing cities by treachery, but concludes that it is Brasidas’ own character that facilitates the creation of many pro-Spartan factions.

¹⁰⁰ θέρει εὐθὺς ὁ Βρασίδης... ἐπὶ Ἄκανθον... ἐστράτευσεν. (4.84.1).

even grudgingly admits that Brasidas was “an effective speaker, for a Spartan” (4.84.2).¹⁰² This speech reveals the influences on each of the factions in every besieged or divided city.

Chief among these influences was the proximity and reliability of military support for each faction. Even though a Spartan army could offer immediate support to an oligarchic faction in Akanthos, it would be little help unless it could defeat the inevitable Athenian counterattack. Likewise, Peloponnesian allies considering defection would also have to judge the likelihood of Spartan punishment, and whether Athenian support would be enough. Brasidas attempted to allay these fears by telling the Akanthians how the Athenians refused to fight him at Nisaea, even though their army was larger than his (4.85.7). This reassurance was intended to convince Akanthos that letting his army into the city and siding with Sparta would be the safest decision in the long run.

In contrast, the immediate threat of an army outside the city walls was no small concern. Thucydides reports that the Akanthians were worried about fruit which was still outside the city walls (4.84.2), and later in his speech Brasidas threatened to lay waste to Akanthian land. Judging whether the immediate or future threat was more serious was critical to a besieged or defecting city.

In addition, Brasidas assured the Akanthians that he would not install a Spartan puppet government; any besieged city would have to suspect that once an enemy was inside the walls he would guarantee future loyalty by putting his own supporters in power. He promised that allies that he brings over to Sparta will be autonomous (4.86.1), in contrast to the cities ‘enslaved’ by the Athenians.

¹⁰¹ Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, IV.84.2 notes that the stasis is between those who invited Brasidas and “ὁ δῆμος” (4.84.2), implying that the majority of the people in Akanthos, not just their leaders, supported Athens.

¹⁰² ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἶπεῖν (4.84.2).

Furthermore, he claimed that he will not enslave “the majority to the few or the minority to everyone” (4.86.4).¹⁰³ Since both Athens and Sparta established democratic and oligarchic governments to secure the loyalty of their allies, changing sides—and gaining power in the process—often meant overthrowing the current system of government. Once Brasidas arrived and attempted to negotiate the defection of Akanthos, beliefs about systems of government were less important than loyalty to Sparta—as the Plataean debate showed. His promise to install a government fair to both parties alleviated the fears of the democratic party, who would expect to be expelled, killed, or somehow coerced into cooperation.

Ultimately, Brasidas convinced the Akanthians. They decided by vote to revolt from Athens, having considered both the advantages of defecting and the dangers of refusing (4.88.1). Brasidas continued on his mission, and Thucydides reports that not long after other cities joined the revolt, including Stagiros (4.88.2), Amphipolis (4.103.3), Myrkinos, Gelepsis, and Oisyme (4.107.3), Thyssos, Kleone, Akrothoi, Olophyxos (4.109.3), Torone (4.114), Lekythos (4.116.2), Scione (4.120.1), and Mende (4.123.1).

These incidents reveal an notable flaw in Thucydides’ Korkyrean stasis narrative. While he claims that Korkyra inspired the rest of Greece and pushed them towards stasis, in his own work there is a much stronger connection between the stasis at Megara and a wave of plots to call in Athens or Sparta. Immediately after Megara both the Athenians under Demosthenes and the Spartans under Brasidas embarked on a campaign of subversion to separate their enemies from their allies. They were successful in many cases because factions within the cities invited them in. Stasis in Thucydides’ narrative often takes place inside a city which is threatened by an army outside its gates.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ τὸ πλεόν τοῖς ὀλίγοις ἢ τὸ ἔλασσον τοῖς πᾶσι (4.86.4).

¹⁰⁴ Puckett, Scott. “Stasis in the Ancient Greek Historians,” p. 177.

In contrast, at Korkyra, the violence of the stasis was largely due to endogenous factors. external allies did not commit any of the atrocities that make Korkyra unique—although their presence did embolden the faction allied with them. On the subversive campaigns of Brasidas and Demosthenes, people in stasis did not commit particularly violent acts against each other—except for the occasional assassination. In fact, Brasidas was remarkably lenient, allowing defeated Athenians in Amphipolis and Torone to stay in the city and keep their property or to leave with their possessions (4.105.2, 4.114.1). But none of the religious impieties that occurred at Korkyra were repeated on any large scale in Greece.

Stasis in Parrhasia

Perhaps inspired by Brasidas' efforts, the Spartan king Pleistonax led an army into Arcadia against the Parrhasians, where a faction (στάσις) in the city had asked the Spartans to free them from their Athenian masters (5.33.1).¹⁰⁵ Thucydides does not provide many details about this stasis—he only uses the term to refer to the faction inviting the Spartans. Pleistonax destroyed the Athenian fortress and liberated the city, then returned to Sparta (5.33.3). The circumstances of this episode suggest that the Spartan operation was more a military campaign than a civil conflict. There is no report of violence within the city, and the emphasis of the narrative is on the Spartans.

Stasis in Argos

In 5.76 Thucydides reports another stasis taking place in 418 BCE. The Spartans went out on campaign to Argos, where “they had men friendly to them and desiring to overthrow the

¹⁰⁵ Presumably the oligarchic faction: Cartwright, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, ad loc. (p.210).

democracy in Argos” (5.76.2).¹⁰⁶ The Spartans intended to use their army to give their allies in the city good reason to suggest an alliance with Sparta, then overthrow the democracy.

Thucydides gives unique attention to this episode and records speeches given by some of the conspirators to the assembly to trick them into allying with Sparta. This alliance lasted for some time, and eventually a Spartan army returned, overthrew the oligarchy and installed an oligarchy (5.81.2).

After a year of oligarchic rule, the democratic faction launched a counterattack on the oligarchs and were victorious; “they killed some and drove out others” (5.82.2).¹⁰⁷ This is one of the few pitched battles—here Thucydides uses μάχη—that occurs during a stasis, and is distinctly reminiscent of the civil war in Korkyra. In addition, this conflict lasted longer than usual; the Spartans ignored the calls for aid of the oligarchs in the city for some time (5.82.3) and were too late to prevent their defeat. The next year, Sparta retaliated and campaigned against Argos, tearing down newly constructed walls and killing all the men in the Argive village of Hysiai.

This stasis is one of the most violent that Thucydides mentions. Pitched battles within a city between two factions are rare in his work, and this incident seems particularly vicious. Even after driving out the oligarchs, the Argives later campaigned against the village where they had settled in hopes to finish them off (5.83.3). Thucydides surely felt this example of a post-Korkyrean stasis would shock his readers, but he does not make any condemnations of this retaliation. However, there is a conspicuous lack of the treachery and duplicity present in Korkyra. Missing also are violations of sanctuaries. Nonetheless, this episode is an important

¹⁰⁶ ἦσαν δὲ αὐτοῖς πρότερόν τε ἄνδρες ἐπιτήδαιοι καὶ βουλόμενοι τὸν δῆμον τὸν ἐν Ἄργει καταλῦσαι (5.76.2).

¹⁰⁷ τοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτεινε, τοὺς δὲ ἐξήλασεν (5.82.2).

part of Thucydides' stasis model, as it reinforces his claim that factions after Korkyra were more willing to kill their rivals than before.

More Stasis in Athens

Thucydides gives a lengthy narrative of the coup at Athens in 411 BCE. This coup is the ultimate struggle between oligarchic and democratic factions in Athens during the Peloponnesian war. With the city still reeling from the disastrous campaign in Sicily, oligarchic elements conspired with Alcibiades to replace the Athenian democracy with an oligarchy. Thucydides reports that while Alcibiades did in fact send word to the most powerful, “more on their own account themselves, the trierarchs at Samos and the most powerful of the Athenians were eager to destroy the democracy” (8.47.2).¹⁰⁸

Thus, the Athenian internal conflict—Thucydides does not call it a stasis yet—began internally, with the promise of external support from Persia. These circumstances resemble those of many smaller cities caught in the middle of the Peloponnesian war. Athens is now forced to ‘choose’ between democracy and oligarchy. The current government is a democracy, but an external actor can provide conspirators with personal power if they overthrow the government and install a democracy. Thucydides points out that it is not so much ideology that motivates Alcibiades as the desire to return home (8.48.4). Surely similar motivations inspired the other conspirators.

One conspirator opposed recalling Alcibiades and the change of government. The general Phrynichos put forward several convincing arguments against the plot, but was overruled. He

¹⁰⁸ τὸ δὲ πλεόν και ἀπὸ σφῶν αὐτῶν οἱ ἐν τῇ Σάμῳ τριήραρχοί τε τῶν Ἀθηναίων και δυνατώτατοι ὄρμηγτο ἐς τὸ καταλῦσαι τὴν δημοκρατίαν (8.47.2). Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford University Press, 1981), VIII.48.4 (p. 108) add that Thucydides clearly agrees with Phrynichos' opinions of stasis.

stated, “this was best for them, that they not be in stasis (στασιάσωσιν)” (8.48.4).¹⁰⁹ Here some of Thucydides’ requirements for stasis become clearer: the presence of a conspiracy at Samos does not create a stasis in Athens. It is only when the conspiracy begins operations in Athens itself that the city would be in stasis.

Some members of the conspiracy returned to Athens to argue before the assembly that Alcibiades could bring the Persian satrap Tissaphernes into the war on the Athenian side, and thus should be recalled to the city. Thucydides reports that the people of Athens gave up their democracy willingly. Convinced by the conspirator Peisandros that “there would be no other salvation” (8.54.1)¹¹⁰, they gave way. Alcibiades proved unable to persuade Tissaphernes, and Athens was left with no foreign support and a new oligarchic government. Peisandros and other conspirators, returning from the embassy to Tissaphernes, established oligarchies in Samos (8.63.3), Thasos (8.64.2), and all along the coast on their route to Athens (8.65.1)—although many of these cities, newly freed from democracy, “went right on to freedom, not valuing good law and order under the Athenians” (8.64.5).¹¹¹

By the time they arrive in Athens, the rule of the oligarchy is well underway. In 8.66 Thucydides includes an interesting passage that resembles 3.82. Thucydides describes the reign of terror under the oligarchs, saying that the Council of the Bean “discussed nothing that did not suit the conspirators” (8.66.1).¹¹² Thucydides adds that “if someone should even speak out, immediately in some fitting way he was killed” (8.66.2)¹¹³, and that “anyone not suffering violence considered it a gain, even if he had remained silent” (8.66.2).¹¹⁴ These moralizing

¹⁰⁹ σφίσι δὲ περιοπτέον εἶναι τοῦτο μάλιστα, ὅπως μὴ στασιάσωσιν (8.48.4).

¹¹⁰ μὴ εἶναι ἄλλην σωτηρίαν (8.54.1).

¹¹¹ ἐχώρησαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀντικρυς ἐλευθερίαν τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπούλου εὐνομίας οὐ προτιμήσαντες (8.64.5).

¹¹² ἐβούλευον δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι μὴ τοῖς ζυνεστῶσι δοκοίη (8.66.1).

¹¹³ εἰ δὲ τις καὶ ἀντεῖποι, εὐθὺς ἐκ τρόπου τινὸς ἐπιτηδείου ἐτεθνήκει (8.66.2).

¹¹⁴ κέρδος ὁ μὴ πάσχων τι βίαιον, εἰ καὶ σιγῶη, ἐνόμιζεν (8.66.2).

comments closely resemble those in 3.82 where Thucydides condemns the events in Korkyra. It also shows how Athenians were more and more willing to kill their own fellow citizens.

It is important to note that these crimes occurred while the conspiracy was still in progress. Peisandros had not yet returned to the city and established the Council of Four Hundred (8.67-68). The circumstances in which the Athenian reign of terror occurred closely resemble those of the stasis in Korkyra, where no single government was in charge. In Athens, an ongoing conspiracy against the standing government leads to violence and fear, just as in Korkyra the active oligarchic conspiracy against the democrats led to murder and the civil war.

Thucydides does describe violence under the Four Hundred—“the Four Hundred, each with a hidden dagger...set on the Councilors of the Bean in the council house and told them to leave taking their pay” (8.69.4).¹¹⁵ Later “they killed some certain men, not a great number...imprisoned others...and exiled some” (8.70.2).¹¹⁶ However, this violence is not on par with that of the earlier conspiracy, and absolutely not the equal of that in Korkyra. Thucydides gives an interesting comparison, showing that King Agis of the Spartans “thinking the city was not stable” (8.71.1)¹¹⁷ marched to Attika, “hoping that either they [the Athenians] in disarray would be more willing to surrender, or that on account of the confusion arising both inside and outside he could not fail to capture at least the Long Walls on his first assault because of their deserted state” (8.71.1).¹¹⁸

This passage mirrors Archidamos’ reasoning earlier in Book 2. Both Spartan kings hoped to take advantage of division and uproar in the city and make military gains. However, Agis was

¹¹⁵ οἱ τετρακόσιοι μετὰ ξιφιδίου ἀφανοῦς ἕκαστος... ἐπέστησαν τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ κυάμου βουλευταῖς οὓσιν ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ καὶ εἶπον αὐτοῖς ἐξιέναι λαβοῦσι τὸν μισθόν (8.69.4).

¹¹⁶ καὶ ἄνδρας τέ τινες ἀπέκτειναν οὐ πολλοὺς...καὶ ἄλλους ἔδησαν, τοὺς δὲ καὶ μετεστήσαντο (8.70.2).

¹¹⁷ ὁ δὲ νομίζων τὴν πόλιν οὐχ ἡσυχάζειν (8.71.1).

¹¹⁸ ἐλπίσας ἢ παραχθέντας αὐτοὺς μᾶλλον ἂν χειρωθῆναι σφίσιν ἢ βούλονται ἢ καὶ αὐτοβοεῖ ἂν διὰ τὸν ἐνδοθέν τε καὶ ἔξωθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς γενησόμενον θόρυβον· τῶν γὰρ μακρῶν τειχῶν διὰ τὴν κατ’ αὐτὰ ἐρημίαν λήψεως οὐκ ἂν ἀμαρτεῖν (ibid.).

even less accurate in his predictions: Thucydides says that there was “not in any way a movement within the city” (8.71.2)¹¹⁹, in contrast with the *ξυστάσις* (dissension) Athens experienced after the ravaging of Acharnian territory.

The rule of the Four Hundred soon was struck by internal conflicts of its own. Leaders of a moderate group of the Four Hundred, Theramenes and Aristokrates, said that “they wanted to be rid of so excessively narrow an oligarchy, and that it was necessary instead to designate the Five Thousand in reality not in name and put the government on a fairer basis” (8.89.2).¹²⁰ However, Thucydides remarks that these arguments were only the “political form of their words” (8.89.3)¹²¹, and that in reality they were motivated by “φιλοτιμίας” (8.89.3)—the same love of honor that motivated the factions at Korcyra. The oligarchs in Athens “did not expect that the oligarchy would be stable” (8.89.4).¹²² Therefore “each man contended to be the first leader of the people” (8.89.4)¹²³, certain that the democracy would soon return. This secondary moralizing passage in 8.89.3-4 parallels that at 8.66 and 3.82. In 8.66, Thucydides reminds readers of the horrors of internal conflict, and in 8.89 he again reveals the true ambitions of factional leaders.

This division between radical and moderate oligarchs quickly escalated. The crisis culminated in a band of hoplites under Theramenes tearing down the fortifications around the Piraeus (8.92). There was no coup however, and the arrival of a Peloponnesian fleet delayed any potential negotiations between the Four Hundred and the advocates of the hypothetical Five Thousand (8.94). The Athenians launched their ships but were soundly defeated off the coast of Eretria, “because the city was in stasis (*στασιαζούσης*)” (8.95.2).¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ ἔνδοθεν οὐδ’ ὀπωστιοῦν ἐκίνησαν (8.71.2).

¹²⁰ οὐ τὸ ἀπαλλαξείειν τοῦ ἄγαν ἐς ὀλίγους ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς πεντακισχιλίους ἔργῳ καὶ μὴ ὀνόματι χρῆναι ἀποδεικνύειν καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν ἰσαιτέραν καθιστάναι (8.89.2).

¹²¹ ἦν δὲ τοῦτο μὲν σχῆμα πολιτικὸν τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῖς (8.89.3).

¹²² οὐκ ἐδόκει μόνιμον τὸ τῆς ὀλιγαρχίας ἔσσεσθαι (8.89.4).

¹²³ ἠγωνίζετο οὖν εἷς ἕκαστος αὐτὸς πρῶτος προστάτης τοῦ δήμου γενέσθαι (8.89.4).

¹²⁴ οἷα πόλεώς τε στασιαζούσης (8.95.2).

This is one of the few times Thucydides uses stasis vocabulary to describe the situation in Athens. However, in other descriptions of stasis Thucydides omits the term but obviously intends a similar meaning. Thus, the entire narrative of the conspiracy of the Four Hundred could be considered a stasis¹²⁵, with a flashpoint arising when a division in the oligarchic ranks brings the city to the brink of violence. Using stasis to describe the relative quiet of the coup would have diluted the narrative effect of using πόλεως τε στασιαζούσης in 8.95.2 to describe the new, more aggressive confrontation. Thucydides also uses στασιάζω in 8.78, where Peloponnesian soldiers are angry with their leader Astyochos for not pressing their advantage against Athens, which is crippled by faction.

After this naval battle, the Athenians “voted to depose the Four Hundred and entrust their affairs to the Five Thousand” (8.97.1).¹²⁶ Those who had “been the most important in the oligarchy” (8.98.1)¹²⁷ immediately fled—another symptom of stasis that Thucydides has described earlier. Thucydides firmly declares that “stasis (στάσις) came to an end”(8.98.4)¹²⁸ after the new more moderate government was established and the oligarchs fled the city.

Thucydides also mentions that numerous cities revolted from Athens during this period. The most important of these was Samos, where the conspiracy first arose. Thucydides reports that Samos “was already making revolution concerning the oligarchy” (8.73.1)¹²⁹ almost immediately after the conspirators established the oligarchy.

The Samians who had previously been democratic at Peisandros’ instruction attacked their enemies for being democratic and established an oligarchy (8.73). When the Samians heard

¹²⁵ As Gomme believes in Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, VIII.78, p.272.

¹²⁶ τοὺς τετρακοσίους καταπαύσαντες τοῖς πεντακισχίλοις ἐνηψίσαντο τὰ πράγματα παραδοῦναι (8.97.1).

¹²⁷ ἦσαν τῆς ὀλιγαρχίας μάλιστα (8.98.1).

¹²⁸ στάσις ἐπαύσατο (8.98.4).

¹²⁹ ἐνεωτερίζετο ἤδη τὰ περὶ τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν (8.73.1).

(exaggerated) rumors of the troubles Athens was experiencing under the Four Hundred, the democrats were able to reestablish their power after a brief struggle (8.74-77).

Other states that revolted or were betrayed with less fanfare were Oropos (8.60.1), Abydos (8.61.1), Lampsakos (8.62.1), Thasos (8.64.4), Byzantion (8.80.3), all the cities under Pharnabazos and Tissaphernes (8.99.1), Eresos (8.100.3), and Kyzikos (8.107.1). Every one of these cities at some point underwent a type of stasis, where an oligarchic or anti-Athenian party seized power and causing a revolt from Athens. Thucydides does not go into detail describing incidents in these cities, but the sequence of events was probably very similar to others he has described.

V. Conclusion

These examples of stasis during the Peloponnesian War reveal a great deal of diversity in the circumstances that can cause a stasis. While many of these conflicts are the result of plots, a stasis only arises when an army led by an enemy is outside the city walls. Sometimes the surprise arrival of an army outside the city triggers a stasis.¹³⁰ In most cases there is almost no violence inside the city, while occasionally a few guards or political enemies are murdered. In general, democratic attacks lead to more violence, while oligarchic coups are the result of plots. Usually a stasis does not last more than a few days, but the Athenian stasis lasted for months. Usually a stasis hinders a city's ability to project external force, although on some occasions factions put their differences behind them to fight an external enemy.

These kinds of stasis contrast with ancient pre-Korkyrean staseis, which were rarely the result of plots, and earlier staseis involving the Persians, which mostly were the result of Persian invasions. The common theme of greed and personal ambition prevails across all stasis

¹³⁰ Puckett, Scott. "Stasis in the Ancient Greek Historians," p. 177.

narratives. Furthermore, in most incidents of stasis, defeated combatants are able to flee or escape, as their opponents are content to drive them out, not destroy them completely. Even after Korkyra, most defeated factions survive. In fact, many incidents of stasis are nonviolent, including many of the cities betrayed to Brasidas. Only on a few occasions does a stasis devolve to extreme violence, and this usually occurs when a foreign power is immediately present to support one faction and guarantee victory. This divide between non-violent stasis and violent stasis suggests that there were two different connotations for the term. Unfortunately, there is no clear indicator of what denotes dissension and what signifies civil war. There is no real pattern in usage of the noun στάσις (which appears twenty-seven times) or the verb ἐστασίαζε (twenty-one times).¹³¹ This vagueness reveals a conceptual gap in ancient Greek political thought: there is no term available for Thucydides to distinguish between a stasis that only resulted in disagreements and a stasis that caused widespread violence.

The only examples of stasis where Thucydides mentions considerable internal violence are Megara, Argos, and Athens. Only at Argos and Korkyra was the defeated faction pursued and destroyed utterly. Argos is the only example of the “out-of-the-way revenge” that Thucydides mentions in 3.82. The ploy at Megara to sneak Athenian troops into the city alongside a boat is really the only example of a cunning plot; in most other cases conspirators merely sent secret messages to their external allies.

In 3.82 Thucydides says there was a “revolution in thinking.” The evidence appearing in other incidents of stasis supports the notion that attempts to seize power became increasingly common; Thucydides describes many incidents of plots to seize power and coups that occurred after Korkyra. In reality, these episodes bear closer resemblance to the large stasis at Megara

¹³¹ Barnard, Mark. “Stasis in Thucydides’ Narrative and Analysis of Factionalism in the Polis.” PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1980, p. 33

than to Korkyra, but because the civil war at Korkyra chronologically occurred before Megara, Thucydides attributes the origin of later staseis to Korkyra. However, even the numerous incidents of stasis that Thucydides records do not justify the claim at 3.82.1 that “virtually all Greece was in turmoil.”

There is less evidence supporting a revolution in thinking with regard to extraordinary retributions. Argos is the only real example of rivals fighting to the death and pursuing their enemies after their defeat. However, Thucydides does describe more incidents of extraordinary revenge that do not occur during a stasis; the best example of this is the Mytilenean debate, where the Athenians were fully prepared to kill and enslave every citizen of Mytilene. The Plataean debate provides more evidence; it shows a perverted sense of justice reduced to the services rendered towards one side of a conflict. This is clearly a change of morals such as those Thucydides describes in 3.82. It is possible that his comments were meant not only to apply to internal conflicts, but to Greek society as a whole as well.¹³² It is not that the Peloponnesian War is a fundamentally internal conflict, which is somehow more violent and treacherous than war, but rather that stasis is a kind of war that arises within a polis. The observations in 3.82-83 do not apply to the Peloponnesian War because it is similar to stasis, they apply to stasis because stasis is similar to war.

Thucydides has provided paper-thin evidence for his claim in 3.82 that stasis after the Korkyrean civil war grew more violent, being aware of earlier events. The stasis at Argos is the only real evidence of an “out-of-the-way revenge,” and the stasis at Megara is the only plot to seize power that involves any level of cunning. Do these two examples really indicate the trend towards worse violence that Thucydides says existed? Perhaps not.

¹³² Macleod, Colin. “Thucydides on Faction (3.82-3).” In *Collected Essays of Colin Macleod*, edited by Barbara Macleod, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 123.

One of Thucydides' objectives in recording the history of the Peloponnesian war is to describe the immense suffering the war caused (1.23). As such, the few moral authorial interjections that he makes, such as at Korkyra or in the plague narrative, support this goal by emphasizing suffering and tragedy, and the role of war as a "violent teacher" (3.82.2). His claim that incidents of stasis grew more common and violent as the war progressed can be explained as a rhetorically effective exaggeration.

In his narrative, he provides a bare minimum of evidence to support this claim: only the conflict at Argos reached levels even close to Korkyra. However, examining the relative lack of evidence from a different perspective yields other possible interpretations. Thucydides may have originally not intended to provide any evidence whatsoever in support of his statements in 3.82, but felt compelled to include brief episodes that supported his viewpoint because of his own high standards for citing evidence. This may not have been the case, but is definitely not impossible.

Ultimately, the fact remains that there is a discrepancy between Thucydides' narrative and his authorial commentary. Thucydides has a well-earned reputation for his attention to detail and accuracy. In my opinion, making a claim for moral and rhetorical effect does not tarnish this reputation. Judgment and analysis of facts differ for every person, and Thucydides clearly held beliefs—drawn from his own experience—about stasis during the Peloponnesian War that he included even though the other details of his history do not necessarily support him. Thucydides' interjection of his own judgment into his work does not weaken his historiographical authority, but makes it more powerful.¹³³

¹³³ I would like to thank everyone who helped me with this project, including my family, Professors Downie and Naiden, Professor Bob Connor and everyone else at the Thucydides Gala last fall, and especially my advisor Professor Emily Baragwanath.

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