Being Bound to the People: Oaths Between Athens & Its Allies During the Pentekontaēteia

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Introduction. Oaths in the Athenian Empire.

I. Introduction

How do states make and maintain political alliances? This is a question that many great thinkers have pondered, often in reflection on the policy and actions of their states. In ancient Greece, one mechanism necessary to make and maintain an alliance was through giving and taking oaths.\(^1\) Oaths (*horkoi* [singular, *horkos*]) were religious in nature, and they bound a group or groups, be they a village (*kômē*), city-state (*polis*), or a people (*ethnos*) to a set of actions. More often, they were restrictive, providing a laundry list of what the oath takers could not do, rather than what they were obliged to do.\(^2\) Oaths between states were typically displayed in public, and they were frequently invoked by those involved. That means that they were also held close in memory and were of significant importance to those who were swearing.\(^3\) In regards to oaths, the Athenian alliance was a trailblazer.\(^4\) There are many nuances and important developments among the oaths between Athens and its allies in the *pentekontaēteia*, the fifty years’ period between the end of the Persian Wars in 479 B.C.E. and the start of the Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C.E.\(^5\) During this time period, Athens was the leading member of a political arrangement of Greek states standing in resistance to Persia. This arrangement has been called the


\(^{5}\) *Ibid.*, 2.
Delian League because of its original treasury and point of assembly on the island of Delos, sacred to Apollo. The alliance was always led by the Athenians, but its affairs would eventually be dominated by Athens to the degree that historians call the confederacy the Athenian empire (although the term arkhē or “rule” is more fitting). The oaths sworn by Delian League members can show the changing significance of the alliances between Athens and its allies in the mid-fifth century. These changes are rarely subtle; there is usually a marked change in wording, rather than simply a change in emphasis. In a way, these changes show the transformation of the Athenian empire from an arrangement of allies (summakhoi [singular, summakhos]) to a subordinate relationship between Athens and what could be called subjects (hypēkooi [singular, hypēkoos]). Although the word hypēkoos does not appear in the Delian League oaths, the condition requiring the allied states to hold the same as echthroi kai philoi, or to have the same friends and enemies, is a noticeable change that points to the changing status of the allied states. Most importantly, these oaths show that the Athenian arkhē was constantly revising the policies of its alliances in an attempt both to maintain their political significance and to furnish better, lasting alliances with the states involved. By doing this, the Athenian arkhē demonstrated that oaths were a way of making and maintaining power in the Greek world.

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6 The term “empire” comes from the Latin term imperium and denotes a deep level of social and political connection between the center of authority and the peripheries. The Greek term arkhē (from arkho ‘to begin, rule’) is more fit for the denoting purposes of the Athenian political structure because it signifies the subordinate relationship without over-emphasizing the administrative influence of the Athenian state. The Greek word hēgemonia (“chief command or sovereignty”) also fits this purpose. LSJ 301.

7 Sommerstein, Oaths and the State, 185-186.
Oaths were an essential aspect and an important manifestation of Greek political arrangements because they organized relationships between people or states (the latter naturally being more relevant here). Oaths were the way in which two political entities manifested or represented their relationship, and it was not uncommon for one or both entities to invoke the agreement during a dispute, or even during a peaceful interchange.\(^8\) These oaths not only configured the relationship, but they assigned specific functions for both entities involved, including mutual obligations and limitations. There were several types of oaths that might be considered political, i.e., involving policies between or within states.\(^9\) Such oaths include oaths of alliance, peace treaties, battlefield truces, and even oaths between Greeks and barbarians, such as those made by Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, or by the Persians who took his role as overlord of the Greeks in the coast-lands of Asia Minor.\(^10\) Some of the oaths in our period are recounted by historians, such as Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, but still others are known through inscription on stone. One might assume that the oaths paraphrased by these historians are treated similarly to speeches within their writings; that is, that their subject matter may be accurately reproduced while the exact wording and stipulations may have been altered for historical effect.\(^11\) Because some oaths were inscribed in stone, they comprise somewhat more direct

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\(^8\) Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 323.

\(^9\) Rhodes *Horkos* 12.

\(^10\) Ibid., 13.

\(^11\) Cf. Thucydides 1.22.1: καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ ἔποιον ἑκατον ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἠδή ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεγέντων διαμηνυμένης ἦν ἐμοὶ τε ὅπως ἠκούσα καὶ τοῖς ἀλλοθέν ποθὲν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλετος: ὡς δὲ ἐνδόκου ἐμοὶ ἑκατον περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ᾿ εἰπεῖν, ἑχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ζυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεγέντων, οὐτως εἰρηται.
evidence by the very nature of this medium. Moreover, the permanence of early inscribed oaths also reflects the typical interstate relationships of Archaic Greece, which tended to be made between aristocratic elites, enjoying stable, traditional interrelations, and were subject to few changes or alterations.\textsuperscript{12} With the fifth century and the rise of democracy, interstate alliances in the Classical period became more variable. The new or altered relationships of the allies in the Delian League that were created by oath-taking reveal the fluid nature of the alliances.\textsuperscript{13} The Athenians and their allies were constantly reviewing their political procedures and making changes, and for this reason, oaths were sometimes changed and re-sworn in an effort to become more suitable vis-à-vis contemporary interstate policy. At some times, Athens would make oaths seemingly harsher, while at other times Athens allowed considerable freedom to loyal allies who regularly paid their tribute.\textsuperscript{14} The tribute was a required contribution to the Delian League (later, the Athenian hegemony) that was used, ostensibly, for funding the military expeditions of the league. In reality, this tribute could be used for the costs of running the Athenian hegemony as a whole, including for judicial purposes.\textsuperscript{15} One could say that oaths could be the manifestation of political alliances in written form as much as inscriptions of the alliances themselves, especially because these oaths were considered to be at the crux of the relationship between two states.

\textsuperscript{12} Sommerstein, \textit{Oaths and the State}, 325.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 324.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, 326; cf. Balcer, 3.
\textsuperscript{15} Aristophanes, \textit{Wasps}, 448-499.
2. The Social & Religious Dimensions of Oaths

To the Greeks, oaths were not always political, but they did always have social aspects. There were many types of oaths in the Greek state, including oaths between individual people.\textsuperscript{16} These latter oaths are exceptionally relevant in tragedy, and there they may as such exhibit their religious importance even more so than their social relevance.\textsuperscript{17} In comedy, they are sometimes mocked, but, as studies concerning Greek comedy have shown, even mocking oaths are a way to preserve their power to bind the parties to agreed-upon provisions in religious terms.\textsuperscript{18} It is easy to see, then, that the oaths of drama have been pitched to extremes: in tragic oaths there is a plenipotentiary sacred obligation (sometimes of devastating proportions in their outcome) while in comic oaths the stipulations can be equated with lies and are thus considered worthless in order to make a point in terms of social satire. Naturally, the actual power of oaths for ordinary Classical Greeks must have been in between the cosmic and the comic. In daily life, it was likely rare to have oaths within or between families, except in certain highly ritualized contexts, such as marriages. An interesting piece of counter-evidence, however, can be seen in the oaths within the philosophical dialogues concerning the life of Socrates. Consider, for example, Crito’s exclamation of “God no” in the eponymous dialogue of Plato.\textsuperscript{19} This shows that the language of swearing to the gods, or commanding their attention during a statement was a

\textsuperscript{16} Bonnie MacLachlin, \textit{Horkos}, 91.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Arlene Allen, \textit{Horkos}, 113.
\textsuperscript{18} Sommerstein, \textit{Horkos}, 125.
\textsuperscript{19} Plato, \textit{Crito}–43a line 3.
frequent occurrence outside of religious contexts and possessed a more casual valence. This type of oath lacks the seriousness that the Greeks traditionally gave their sworn agreements, and such oaths are more expressive of rhetorical exclamation than religious beliefs. In this way, oaths in comedy can be seen as an extension of these oaths of attenuated religiosity.\textsuperscript{20} The closest real-life parallels to the oaths of tragedy are political oaths. This is because the logic behind both types of arrangement is essentially the same: both are sworn to maintain the relationship between two parties by providing an outline of each side’s obligations and restrictions.\textsuperscript{22} It is intriguing that oaths between individuals (whether in tragedy or in real-life) and political oaths are closely related. These similarities highlight the Greek notion of the community as a collection of individuals, who swear oaths to bind themselves, while extra-communal oaths are then sworn in order to create order between communities.\textsuperscript{23} In this way, oaths were the most important way of creating and exhibiting ordered relationships, and fulfilling the fundamental Greek preoccupation with harmoniē or social order.\textsuperscript{24}

Interstate oaths, such as those employed by Athens and the members of the Delian League, were a way of establishing order between two polities and could engender political influence on either side of the relationship.\textsuperscript{25} Considering oaths

\textsuperscript{20} A. Sommerstein (“Cloudy Swearing”, 126) believes that the lack of a religious aspect denies these statements (especially in terms of comedy) the ability to be called oaths, which presupposes the argument that oaths must always be religious and solemn. Such language did not have the lasting effect of truly binding people with obligations, and, therefore, these comic “oaths” do not fully satisfy the conditions outlined in Sommerstein, \textit{Oaths and the State}, 4.

\textsuperscript{21} Sommerstein, \textit{Oaths and the State}, 4; Allan, \textit{Horkos}, 113-114.

\textsuperscript{22} Allan, \textit{Horkos}, 114-115.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, 113-114.

\textsuperscript{24} Solon, 36.19. Cf. Theognis 15-18 where \textit{Harmonia} is emphasized in ellipsis.

\textsuperscript{25} Cf. Balcer, \textit{The Athenian Regulations for Chalcis}, 4. It seems that Athens did not only form increasingly subordinate alliances as the arkhē went on. Consider, for example, the favor given to
in this way, it is easy to see why these arrangements were so important to the classical Greeks.

When discussing oaths, it is necessary to consider their religious dimension. Every Greek oath included an invocation of the gods which was a direct result of the belief that such arrangements were carefully watched over and protected by the gods, and especially Zeus.\textsuperscript{26} It may be easy to forget the importance of such religious aspects in an age when the church and state are separated to such a great degree in modern Western states, but one must remember that the Greeks believed that the state could in no way stand outside the purview of the gods.\textsuperscript{27} The Greek polis was in essence a community of common worshippers of shared cults and their rituals. Some oaths are permeated more thoroughly by their religious aspects to the extent of assuming a sacred focus, while others invoke the gods almost in passing. There seems to be a general trend throughout the history of Athenian diplomacy that interstate oaths tend to become more secular and less religious throughout the Classical period.\textsuperscript{28} This could be the result of growing rationalism and religious skepticism, but is more likely because political arrangements through oaths were becoming more common and banal as Greek poleis began to have regular closer relationships with many

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sommerstein, \textit{Oaths and the State}, 4.
\item See \textit{Ibid.}, 4.
\item S.I. Johnston, \textit{Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide}, (Harvard: UP, 2004), 543. Note also the Ephebic Oath, which goes into great detail regarding the religious importance of oath-taking and lists many deities: Lycurgus, \textit{Against Leocrates} 1.77:
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
neighbors, leading to a decline in the religious valence of each individual oath.29
The invocation of the gods could become a formulaic line at the end of an
inscription, rather than a well-emphasized cautionary elaboration, as had been
prevailing earlier.30 It seems that the growing number of oaths made the emphasis
on the gods formulaic, so that the religious aspects of the oaths were not always
detailed. During the *pentekontaētia* and the fifth century in general, the Greeks
probably did not believe in the gods any less than they had earlier, and it seems
that oaths were consistently associated with maintaining divine order and asking
for divine protection over the agreement.31 In other words, while the oaths may
not be as expressive in terms religious, we cannot conclude that the oath-taking
and oath-giving had less religious significance than they had previously. In fact,
based on the care Greeks took with creating and upholding oaths, the religious
dimension of oaths seems to be their defining characteristic, i.e. the aspect which
allowed them to hold their social and political importance. Although some people
may be inclined to consider the Athenian state as one which was highly secular in
nature, one must remember that the obligations of the allies to Athens, besides
personal service and monetary payments, were often religious in nature,
including, for example, supplying a panoply and a cow for the Panathenaiac

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29 SGHI #52, l. 62-63.
Their sacred character was not only central to the oaths of the Athenians, but was an aspect that predominated in all Greek politics.

Thus in considering Athenian oaths in the *pentekontaētia*, we resist the inclination to interpret them as only political or social documents. This claim that oaths are not always religious in nature has been made, being supported by skepticism over the intensity of Greek religious beliefs. This skepticism might stem from the disdain for effects of superstitious beliefs on policy-making that Thucydides demonstrates while writing his inquiry into the Peloponnesian war, as well as the rationalism of the Ionian philosophers (and others). While the argument against the religious dimension of oaths was strong, the current consensus of opinion is that oaths always carry religious force. Alan Sommerstein supports this argument by claiming that Athenian harshness towards their rebelling allies reflects a commitment by the Athenians to do the work of the gods. In other words, if a *polis* broke an oath, they should face punishment, whether from the Athenian state as an agent of the cosmic order or at length from the gods themselves. This argument, however, misunderstands these oaths as objects of religious, rather than political agency. While it seems that some Athenians could have thought of themselves as “doing the gods’ dirty work”, it seems more likely that they were concerned with bringing reciprocal order back into the relationship of alliance by enforcing the oath. After all, while the oaths were promises that were backed by the gods, they also outlined in clear terms the

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32 *IG* I 14. 2-8; 34. 41-43; 46. 15-17; 71. 55-58.  
33 Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 3.  
social and political relationship between the two states. In this way, the religious aspect of the oaths is maintained; although harsh examples of Athenian imperial policy were not done on behalf of the gods, they were done to reestablish harmoniē where it had been lost. In this capacity, oaths served as a way to legitimize the continued authority of the Athenian state, even when financial matters and military disasters had crippled the once-flourishing state, such as after the disastrous Sicilian expedition and even more so later after the battle of Aegospotami.

3. The Political Significance of Oaths

Athenian oaths involved the people (dēmos), including both the people of Athens and the people of the allied community. The Greeks, who liked to view the polis as a unit of blood relations, were accustomed to talking about the decisions of a city as the decisions of its people. As such, rather than stating that “Athens” did something, the Greeks would write that “the Athenians” did it. This is really extraordinary in the Athenian case, as it was indeed the large (yet exclusive) body of male citizens that directly legislated and handled the affairs of the state rather than a small group of aristocratic elite. Additionally, it should be noted that most of the inscribed oaths of the Athenian state have been found on the Acropolis, meaning that they were displayed publicly and could become a

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source for democratic discussion. The oaths between states, such as those of the Delian League and the Athenian arkhē, were public documents, and as such they created a relationship not just between states in an abstract sense, but between all of the inhabitants of both states involved in the arrangement. In fact, the oaths of states in the Delian League may be among the very first examples of the dēmoi of different city-states coming to an agreement. Of course, these agreements would have had to be voted on by the Athenian citizens (and usually by citizens in the allied cities), meaning that the dēmoi of the cities involved played at least a partial role in their formulation. In other cases, while the oaths could have been formulated solely by the elite of a given polis, the dēmos of such a polis must have been incorporated in the acceptance of oath terms, because they were all expected to swear individually. However, Jack Balcer and others have argued that, although the oaths explicitly state that the Athenians and the people of the allied state are swearing the oaths, this is merely a convention: the agreement was really made between the leaders of the two states, rather than their assemblies.

Although the oaths may have been initially sworn between ambassadors alone, there seems to be a significant emphasis on the dēmos of each polis, suggesting that the people were deeply immersed in these agreements.

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38 Meiggs-Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, pp. 80 (Egesta), 89-94 (Erythrae), 121-125 (Kolophon), 138-143 (Chalkis). (Henceforth abbreviated as *SGHI*.)

4. The Political Context of the Delian League

The Delian League originated as an arrangement between allies who would fight together on the battlefield. Its initial purpose was to seek vengeance for the invasions of the Persians under Darius in 490 B.C.E and Xerxes in 480/479 B.C.E. Combined with this mission was mutual defense, although offensive operations aimed at liberating the remainder of the Greek subjects of Persia quickly followed. Thus, the relationship between the allies was that of *summakhoi* (fighters together). At the beginning of the Delian League, allies had a large degree of political independence from the Athenian hegemony. The essential idea that each ally was autonomous with regards to their domestic affairs. As *summakhoi*, each state was required to fight on the same side as the rest of the Delian League, ostensibly offensively against Persia, as Cimon’s great victory in the Eurymedon in circa 465 B.C.E. would show.


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League was formed to avenge the Greeks, it had quickly evolved into an offensive series of attacks which weakened Persian power and led to a vacuum of political hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean, most importantly on the coast of Asia Minor, where Athens would soon become the leading political influence. As the relationship between the Greeks and Persia would change, so too would the relationship among the Greeks in the Delian League.

5. The Original Delian League Oaths

The original oath between Athens and its Delian League allies is not extant, although such oaths must have been sworn by virtue of their significance in political alliances. Additionally, the author of the compendious Athenaiōn Politeia explicitly states that the initial arrangement sworn between the members of the Delian League was consisted of an “ekhthron kai philon” agreement to have the same enemies and friends, but this is almost surely an extrapolation based on later political developments.\(^{44}\) Perhaps more accurately, the Atheniaōn Politeia also mentions that the first oaths were developed under the administration of Aristeides, the great Athenian statesman who had been earlier ostracized in a political machination of Themistokles. By noting that these oaths were sworn in the year of the eponymous archon Timotheus, the Atheniaōn Politeia tells us the date of the first oaths as 478/477 B.C.E., which is just what one would expect.

\(^{44}\) Athenaiōn Politeia 23.5: διό καὶ τοὺς φόρους σῶτος ἢν ὁ τάξις ταῖς πόλεσιν τοὺς πρῶτους, ἔτει τρίτῳ μετὰ τὴν ἐν Σαλαμίνι ναυμαχίαν, ἐπὶ Τιμοθένους ἄρχοντος, καὶ τοὺς ὄρκους ὁμοσεν τοῖς ἱσοπην, ὥστε τὸν αὐτόν πόλεμον εἶναι καὶ φιλόν, ἢ ὁ ὀεὶ καὶ τοὺς μύδρους ἐν τῇ πελάγει καθεσθίναι”. See also Plutarch, Life of Aristeides, 25.1: “ὁ δ’ Ἀριστείδης ὄρκισε μὲν τοὺς Ἐλλήνας καὶ ὠμοσεν ὑπὲρ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, μύδρους ἐμβαλὼν ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀραίς εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, ἱστερον δὲ τὸν πραγμάτων ἄρχειν ἐγκρατέστερον, ὡς ἐσολευ, ἐκβιαζομένοις ἐκέλευε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τὴν ἐπιφορκίαν τρέψαντας εἰς ἐαυτὸν ἢ συμφέρει χρῆσθαι τοῖς πράγμασι.
since it coincides with the year of the Delian League’s foundation.\textsuperscript{45} It is clear, therefore, that the foundation of the league was contingent upon this formative oath, again stressing the central place of such oaths in political matters. This original oath was likely one for mutual defense, although, as we shall see, the exact nature of this relationship does not necessarily mean combined military actions against the Persians. It seems that no matter what the original oaths said verbatim, the relationship of which they were indicative was one involving a basic political alliance between the states.

The original Delian League oaths followed a framework of political alliances which had been sworn by Greek allies in the context of the Persian wars. Sommerstein supposes that the original oath was modeled on the oath taken by Greeks who joined in the offense against Persia after the battle of Mycale, which is recounted in Herodotus.\textsuperscript{46} This oath is a precedent for a Delian League oath, the one which existed between the founding oaths of the league and the first oaths extant in inscriptions. The oath of Mycale, as reported by Herodotus, consists of an agreement to “stay loyal and not desert”, which very closely resembles the \textit{summakhoi} arrangement, but with a few important differences.\textsuperscript{47} Most importantly, swearing to stay loyal does not imply military action. The phrase which is translated as “to not desert” is actually \textit{mē apostēsesthai}, which more accurately means “to not be absent”. This is a vague statement which can mean

\textsuperscript{45} Meiggs, \textit{The Athenian Empire}, 459.
\textsuperscript{46} Sommerstein, \textit{Oaths and the State}, 206
\textsuperscript{47} Herodotus, \textit{Histories}, 9.106.4: “καὶ οὕτω δὴ Σαμίους τε καὶ Χίους καὶ Λεσβίους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους γησίωτας, οἵ ἐτυχον συστατεωόμενοι τοῖς Ἑλλησι, ἐς τὸ συμμαχικὸν ἐποίησαντο, πίστι τε καταλαβόντες καὶ ὀρκίσαντες ἐμμενένειν τε καὶ μὴ ἀποστήσεσθαι, τούτους δὲ καταλαβόντες ὀρκίσαντες ἐπέλεγον τὰς γεφύρας λύσοντες: ἔτι γὰρ ἐδόκεον ἐντεταμένας εὐρήσειν. οὕτωι μὲν δὴ ἐπ᾽ Ἑλλησπόντου ἐπέλεγον”.
absence from either military or non-military affairs. The fact that the verb *apostēsesthai* appears in many different authors from Thucydides to Basil of Caesarea does not help clarify its meaning in this context. It seems safe to assume, however, that whether or not military action was urged by this oath at Mycale, the idea of a *summakhoi*-like relationship is stressed. This could very well be the expectation that allied states would not medize, although it may also imply military support on behalf of the allies.

By looking at earlier oaths, such as the one sworn after the battle of Mycale, one can see that the level of loyalty and military cooperation required by oaths was continually strengthened by the Athenians. One thing that is likely is that the oaths did not contain a stipulation ordering the allies to have the same friends and enemies as any other members of the league, contrary to the *Athenaiōn Politeia*. Surely the Delian League would not have been successful in acquiring allies if the entire foreign policy of Athens was immediately impressed upon the allies from the onset. Rather, it is more sensible to hypothesize that the alliance developed from one of mutual defense, perhaps with stipulations as vague as “to not be absent” to an arrangement of *summakhoi*, or allied states that would fight side by side against Persia. Although this may seem like an insignificant alteration, the political implications of this language were immense, whether or not they were adhered to by the letter. The use of the word “*summakhos*” for ally makes the military alliance much clearer than the oath at Mycale, which simply suggests the ally to be on the Greek side, not to necessarily fight with the Greeks. Later on, the *ekthroi kai philoi* arrangement signaled a stronger alliance, with the
expectation being that every ally of Athens would fight against the enemies of the hegemony.

6. The Summakhoi Arrangement

The *summakhoi* arrangement only lasted as long as most of the Greeks had a common enemy. Once the Persians had been decisively defeated at the Battle of the Eurymedon, there was now much less a great common enemy for the Greeks (even though fighting with the Persians continued), and different Greek city-states began looking more aggressively at one another.\(^\text{48}\) Sparta became the enemy of Athens, and that began a sequence of cultural and political changes in which the aristocrat would eventually become the enemy of an ordinary person in the *dēmos*. In this changing sociopolitical context, the Greeks were not united in armed warfare, as they had been during their earlier defense against Xerxes or in their preemptive strikes against the Persians. With an outside enemy moved back a distance, an internal enemy grew, as manifested through the ideological civil wars or *stasis* which would at length begin to bring the institutions of the Greek *polis* down. Because of the geographical compartmentalization in the Greek homeland, it was natural for states to be small and squabble with their neighbors over territory, especially in regions as arid as Attica and Boiotia. On the other hand, some states, like Athens, used the lack of a common enemy as an impetus

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\(^{48}\) Thucydides 1.102.4 on the rift with Sparta in the late 460s: “οἱ δ’ Ἀθηναῖοι ἔγνωσαν οὐκ ἐπὶ τῷ βελτίωνι λόγῳ ἀποτελόμενοι, ἀλλὰ τινὸς ὑπόπτου γενομένου, καὶ δεινὸν νοησάμενοι καὶ οὐκ ἀξιώσαντες ὑπὸ Λακεδαιμονίου τοῦτο παθεῖν, εὐθὺς ἐπειδὴ ἀνεχόμησαν, ἀρέντες τὴν γενομένην ἐπὶ τῷ Μήδῳ ἐξημαχίαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Ἀργείων τοῖς ἑκείνοις πολεμίοις ἐξημαχοῖς ἐγένοντο, καὶ πρὸς Θεσσαλοὺς ἀμα ἀμφίτεροι οἱ αὐτοὶ ὄρκοι καὶ ἐξημαχία κατέστη”.
for the aggrandizement of their own state. After 454 B.C.E. at the latest, the money from the Delian League allies was going was being held on the Acropolis at Athens rather than in the former treasury in Delos. The money was being used by Athens not only for funding the administration of the *arkhē* but also for the cultural aspects of its leadership, such as the building of large temples and monuments, including the Parthenon.49 As the Athenians saw it, their heightened prosperity showed the favor of the gods for their efforts against Persia, which, on their behalf, had been extraordinarily expensive for the Athenian people and state.

The oaths of the period of Athenian hegemony attest more to a single change in policy rather than a slow and constant transformation in the relationship between the Athenians and their subject allies, even though the implication of this new policy, as shown by the dating of the inscriptions, may have been slow and took some time to become integrated. It must be remembered that oaths and the policies that they indicated were subject to change, and the policy could be reworked before the oath was re-inscribed.50 One of the earlier oaths, the alliance with Erythrae in Asia Minor in 453/452 B.C.E, shows the beginning of stricter Athenian regulations (*SGHI* 80).51 This shows that even before the treasury was moved from Delos to Athens, the Athenian state had achieved a more significant role in the League compared to the other members.52 This seems to be an intriguing judgment, as the Athenians were indeed able to sway decisions of the early Delian League not through force but by virtue of their political importance.

51 *SGHI* 80, 89.
All members of the Delian League were autonomous with regards internal affairs. The oath between Athens and Chalcis in 446/445 B.C.E., with which Balcer is mainly concerned, shows the culmination of trends towards Athenian hegemony, what Thucydides would mark as the end of autonomy and the beginning of a status as a hypēkoos, or a subject relationship in which the allies were subordinated to the Athenian state. However, an interesting fact about the development of these hegemonic oaths is that the all oaths between Athens and Erythrae, Chalcis, and Colophon were made after those cities had revolted, but had been recovered by the Athenians. The fact that they contain similar stipulations suggests that Athens had decided to handle revolting allies in a particular way. It seems, therefore, that there was one policy that had been superseded (even if it was never inscribed in the first place), and another, likely installed just prior to 453/452 B.C.E., in which Athens had decided to subject revolting polities to their own political requirements.

7. The Ekhthroi kai Philoi Arrangement

Therefore, an interesting transformation within the oaths of the Delian League is this movement away from a relationship between summakhoi to a relationship in which both states swear to have the same enemies and friends (ekhthroi kai philoi). The nature of the coordinated ekkthroi kai philoi

54 Balcer, The Athenian Regulations for Chalcis, 11.
relationship will be explored later on, but here it is important to note its link with the characteristics of transformation within the Athenian empire at this time. The change of policy from an alliance concerned with military affairs to a more subordinate political relationship is also closely related to beginning of conflict between the aristocracy and the dēmos of some of the poleis involved in Delian League. The change in policy from merely a relationship among summakhoi was a product of a changing political landscape in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E. Of course, the ekthroi kai philoi agreement presupposes that the states are still summakhoi, because it would be of little use to have the same enemies and friends as the state with which you are creating the agreement if there was no intention to fight on the same side as those friends. It may seem, therefore, that this arrangement made the protection offered under the Athenian empire more inclusive, because not only friends of Athens but also friends of the allied state involved in swearing the oath would be protected. This seems not to be the case, however. The oaths do not involve the Athenians offering to have the same friends and enemies as their allies, but they are instead imposing their relationships of friendship and enmity on the allied state. There are two intriguing points that this insight elicits. First, it means that the Athenians were bringing their allies into broader, more complex foreign political arrangements, which could have been a nuisance for poleis which traditionally looked inward in their policy. It also means that each allied polis with whom the ekthroi kai philoi arrangement was made was subject to the ideological and political inclinations of

55 Sommerstein, Oaths and the State, 208-209.
56 Ibid., 206.
the Athenian state.\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, allied states which had constitutions that differed along ideological lines with the direct democracy of Athens could be forced to view tyrannical, aristocratic, or oligarchic factions not only as enemies of the Athenians, and but also as their own enemies, especially when the foreign policy of Athens became ideologized during the Peloponnesian war. In this way, the \textit{ekhthroi kai philoi} arrangement promotes Athenian democratic ideology, a development which could have been a point of contention between Athens and its allied states.

The transformation from a alliance of \textit{summakhoi} to a relationship between states swearing to have the same enemies as friends shows the changing nature of the Athenian state in the period between the start of the so-called First Peloponnesian war in 460 B.C.E. and the beginning of the first ("Archidamian") phase of the Peloponnesian war in 431 B.C.E. The oaths between Athens and its allies during this period show several important aspects of the transforming relationship between Greek states. Most importantly, oath-making shows that allied states were being subjected to tighter control, especially in terms of political influence. Clauses such as those demanding that Athens and its allies have the same \textit{ekhthroi kai philoi} show that Athens imposed all its own political alliances on the other members of the League. Although this may seem at first glance to be a reciprocal relationship in which the Athenians would also be forced to have the same allies as the state taking the oath with them, this was not the case.

\textsuperscript{57} Rhodes, \textit{Horkos} 22-3.
The other clauses pushing for democratic rule and forcing Athenian justice on the allied states also make it clear that this relationship was not equal, and that Athens was much more prominent in power politics.\(^58\) Also, these oaths show the increased importance of Athenian political ideology, as shown through the protection of the local dēmos and its importance within the oath. Although the Delian League had been formed in order to protect Greece from Persia, it had quickly become a system in which Greek states would be subordinated to Athens, and, therefore, the league would end up creating tension between Greek states by virtue of its shifting balance of power and changing ideological stances, which eventually led to the disastrous Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta.\(^59\)

The oaths between Athens and its allies show some of these aspects of growing tension and subordination, no matter how subtle those changes may be. Through these oaths, one sees the Athenian empire as a political system that is constantly overseeing and revising its oaths with other states, not only in an attempt to aggrandize itself, but also in an attempt to maintain mutual alliances, which they used as a source of political and financial power, and still further as a vehicle to effect social and political change throughout the Greek world.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 7.
Chapter 1. Changing Relationships between Athens & Its Allies

1. Introduction

What forces allowed the Athenians to make political arrangements that served their own political and ideological interests, and how were these political arrangements manifested? The oaths of the Delian League and the Athenian hegemony show very clearly the relationship between Athens and its allied states during the *pentekontaētia*. It is through these interstate decrees that Athens regulated its relationships with individual allied states according to their own policy choice and Athenian attitudes towards the individual state. The oaths show how Athens was able to influence the political and social milieu of allied states under Athenian hegemony through the utilization of the earlier alliance system, that system being the Delian League. While at the beginning of the Delian League allied states exhibited relatively similar degrees of power within the political arrangement, the prominence of Athens was evident to all members of the international organization from the beginning.\(^60\) It was this *de facto* political leadership that allowed the Athenians to create oaths that served their own political and ideological interests, making them *de jure* the sole authority of the Delian League at around the same time that treasury of the league was moved from Delos to Athens. However, it should be noted that the Athenians already had a position of leadership within the Delian League, even though the system was created with an eye towards autonomy among the Greek *poleis* who were

\(^{60}\) Balcer, *The Athenian Regulations for Chalcis*, 12.
involved. Although the compartmentalized geography of Greece made hegemony over a large area by any state difficult, Athens was able to create a hegemony through building upon earlier political systems. It is through oaths, rather than through the taxation recorded on Tribute Lists, that the Athenian empire was able to subordinate their allies progressively. In other words, the oaths which Athens made with allied states both established and maintained their leadership role within the Delian League, and as such they served as a potent token of Athenian imperialism.

2. The Role of Athens as Leader

Through its position of primacy within the Delian League, Athens was able to influence other powerful Greek poleis on the Greek mainland and in the Aegean, including the powerful states of Chalcis, Eretria, and Samos. Ostensibly, the Delian League was controlled by an equally empowered ambassadors from each polis that was involved in that political organization. In reality, however, the Athenians had de facto political supremacy by virtue of their naval leadership (a characteristic which has long defined the nature Athenian hegemony). Often, other poleis, especially smaller poleis without a strong economy or significant political influence, could be intimidated by the apparent strength of Athens and its sphere of influence, perhaps actually for the fear of reprisal, some scholars claim. Although this may be in part true, Athens did not exhibit such behavior

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early in the Delian League’s history, not at least until later in the *pentekontaētia*. The argument that Athens intimidated its allies early on mistakes the nature of early Athenian imperialism, and is perhaps a product of harsh criticism of how the hegemony functioned, reported in Thucydides. The evolution from the apparent fear of reprisal to the possible use of reprisal later in the *pentekontaētia* is best attested in the oaths (aside from Thucydides, who also draws attention to the growing subordination of the Athenian allies). This was an integral part of the transformation from allied states (*summakhoi*) to subordinate states (*hypēkooi*). The change in terminology was not as drastic in the oaths, which go from being arrangements between *summakhoi* to arrangements to have the same friends as enemies (*ekthroi kai philoi*). The states which constituted the Delian League were varied in their political outlooks, with an aristocratic oligarchy, rather than democracy, being the most common form of political organization early in the *pentekontaētia*. Chalcis, Eretria, and Samos were powerful allies, mostly oligarchic in their political outlook, and they were comparably wealthy as a result of their economic power (as in the case of Samos) or because of their geographical control over a large, fertile area (as in the case of both Eretria and Chalcis). As far as these powerful, wealthy city-states were concerned, there was little intimidation by Athens at the beginning of the Delian League, leading some scholars to conclude that early Athenian policy within the League was...

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64 Thucydides 1.79.1: “τοιαῦτα δὲ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι εἶπον. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τῶν τε ξωμάχων ἤκουσαν οἱ Ἀκαδημαῖοι τὰ ἐγκλήματα τὰ ἐς τοὺς Αθηναίους καὶ τῶν Αθηναίων ἐλέξαν, μεταστράμενοι πάντας ἐβουλεύοντο κατὰ σφᾶς αὐτοὺς περὶ τῶν παρόντων.”
65 Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 206.
actually supported by these powerful states. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the primary goal of the League was to undertake reprisals against Persia for their invasions of Greece in 490 and 480/479 B.C.E. To say that such powerful *poleis* were intimidated by Athens quite early on would presuppose that Athenian policies were initially aimed against those allied states, or that there would be some sanctions levied as a result of noncooperation. Although the latter explanation may embody some truth, the former explanation fails to understand the nature of the early Delian League.

Athenian power was not limited to the Greek world. In fact, the hegemony had allied states among Hellenized or semi-Hellenized communities around the Mediterranean, including the people of Egesta (also known as Segesta) in Sicily as well as the Bottiaeans of central Macedonia. It was through these distant connections that Athens was able to spread its own political values and influence throughout the Mediterranean, a phenomenon that was done in part through the use of interstate oaths and the swearing of alliances. What is interesting about the oaths between Athens and these Hellenized peoples (i.e. people who were in touch with Greek culture, but not ethnically Greek) is that they closely resemble the arrangements made between Athens and its ethnically Greek allies.\(^\text{67}\) Although the inscriptions are fragmentary (as most ancient sources are), what historians can tell from these oaths is that they show a parallel series of agreements which seem to be equal in the sense that the Athenians swear to uphold the same policies to which that their Hellenized allies agreed.\(^\text{68}\) However,

\(^\text{67}\) Compare, for instance, *SGHI* #37 with #52.

\(^\text{68}\) *SGHI* #47 & #52.
as will be seen later, although the wording of the policies makes them seem like mutually supportive agreements, the policies represented in them enforced an Athenian lifestyle on the allied state, which forced the ally to effect greater political change within its own city than Athens within itself. One might argue that, although the policies for both Greek and non-Greek allies of Athens are similar in policies and formulation, there was more of a forced change when these oaths were sworn outside of the immediate Greek world of mainland Greece, the Aegean, and the coast of Asia Minor. It makes sense, however, that it would have been more difficult for Greek poleis with a highly organized political system to relinquish their traditional methods of government for a new political system. That can be seen to be especially true in terms of changing from an oligarchy based on rich elites to a democracy of all male citizens (however narrowly democratic dominance was defined).

3. Revolts & Reactions to Athenian Hegemony

Only one revolt is attested before the Persian threat had been largely removed. Later there were two political factors that led to disaffection of the allied states such as Chalcis. Chalcis had always been a powerful player in the politics of the Greek world, partially as a result of its wealth, a product likely of its position of naval and strategic importance and of its command of a large portion of fertile island of Euboea. One could argue that revolts such as these were results of the harsh terms of the Athenian hegemony, while others might argue that the very need for Attic hegemony was gone, since the Persians had
been soundly defeated at Eurymedon in 465 B.C.E. The likely cause for these revolts seems to be a mix between these two factors, coupled with a pattern of general disaffection with Athenians among their allies. The argument that the allied states revolted as a result of the harsh terms of their agreements with Athens fails to understand the primary sources. It was after the revolts themselves, however, that the oaths began to assume harsher terms. For example, it is more apparent in these post-revolt oaths that the subordination of the allied state was increasing, and that Athens was promoting its own democratic ideology and practices. Against that background, it seems that allied states were revolting because of a rising tide of disaffection, and also because they did not judge that Athens was needed as a leader within the Greek world in confronting the Persians any more (or, possibly at all). This is a logical result of the geographical compartmentalization of Greece, which led to political compartmentalization as well. One should note, however, that the Greeks accounted for the naval hegemony of Athens by reference to an established tradition of recurring or successive thalassocracy or rule by sea. We shall explore this conception next, and an attempt will then be made to reconcile these two seemingly opposed influences, that is, of autonomy (resting on compartmentalization) and of thalassocracy (caused by seapower).

Although the geography of Greece did not easily support large states, there was a tradition of political power that did stretch beyond the limits of the polis. The characteristic modality of this, thalassocracy or rule by the sea, was best

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envisaged by Thucydides: thalassocracy retains its relevance for understanding how Greek polities interact. Thucydides traces the phenomenon back to the “empire” of King Minos of Knossos, an observation so noteworthy that it has caused historians in the modern age to call the period of prehistory of Bronze Age Crete “Minoan” even though that term fails to portray the nature of politics on the island of Crete at that time as evidenced by archaeology.\footnote{Thucydides 1.4: “Μίνως γὰρ παλαίτατος ὃν ἁκοῆ ἱσμεν ναυτικὸν ἐκτήσατο καὶ τῆς νῦν Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ πλείστον ἐκράτησε καὶ τῶν Κυκλάδων νῆσων ἠρξὲ τε καὶ ὀἰκιστῆς πρῶτος τῶν πλείστων ἐγένετο. Κάρας ἐξελάσας καὶ τοὺς ἐαυτοῦ παιδὰς ἣγεμόνας ἐγκαταστήσας: τὸ τε ληστικὸν, ὡς εὐκός, καθήρει ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐφ᾽ ὅσον ἐδύνατο, τοῦ τὰς προσόδους μᾶλλον ἴδαν αὐτῷ.”} In fact, Minoan is still the conventional term used when discussing Cretan prehistory. Looking at this idea of the Greek naval empire can help shed some light on aspects of the Athenian hegemony. First of all, Thucydides is wrong to attribute colonization of any territories and probably the suppression of pirates in the Aegean to Minos (if he indeed existed outside later myths).\footnote{Gomme, \textit{An Historical Commentary on Thucydides} (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 99-100.} Yet, at a minimum, Thucydides in this passage seems to establish that there had been some significant level of political involvement by the Cretans within the Aegean. Of course, the Minoans traded widely and were warlike at times, but they did not have the level of political centralization necessary to exercise hegemony over the Aegean states. By carefully decoding Thucydides’ reservations and by considering the nature of Minoan governance, one can see that there is a risk of exaggerating the level of Cretan involvement within the Aegean. The Minoans were apt to trade with the people of the Aegean, and there is no doubt that the Cretans were more successful
at seafaring in the Bronze age than many of the other Aegean states. Nonetheless, the sort of first thalassocracy discussed by Thucydides seems to be centered on trade contacts and mutual benefaction rather than an *arkhē* in the same sense that the Athenian presence in the 5th century Aegean exhibited. In other words, while there was a tradition of Aegean dependence (perhaps through trade) on more powerful polities, this tradition did not so early take the form of an organized, hierarchical system. In this way, the Athens was once again utilizing a system that existed before their hegemony, but they were bringing it to an elevated heightened level of significance and political control.

Some states saw the increasing power of the Athenians as self-aggrandizement and rejected the idea of Athenian hegemony. On the other hand, the Athenians believed that the tribute from the allies was necessary for the naval protection of the Greek world, and, as will be shown later on, as a tool for the maintenance of harmony among the Greek states. The argument that the Athenians were partaking in self-aggrandizement is a result of the use of Delian League funds not only for the defense of the Greeks against Persia (which had become obsolete) but perhaps also for the construction of the long walls, which were likely built up for the purpose of Athenian defense from Spartan aggression, rather than another Persian invasion. Still later on, these funds were being used for the building program of Pericles. Although beautiful and awe-inspiring buildings were built during this time period, the allies had to wonder where their money was going. The allies probably expected that the tribute, as well as their

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72 Thucydides 1.107.1: “ἔρξαντο δὲ κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους τούτους καὶ τὰ μακρὰ τείχη Ἀθηναίων ἔς θάλασσαν οἰκοδομεῖν, τὸ τε Φαληρόνδε καὶ τὸ ἕς Πειραιά”. 
other obligations to the Athenian state, would have ended after the Peace of Kallias. But the tribute remained in existence, even though Athens still extolled the idea of mutual defense rather than Athenian offensive operations. The allies could have simply looked at the rise of incredible buildings and construction throughout the city of Athens as the wrongful utilization of their own funds. The question then becomes: how did the Athenians get the money for those building projects? It seems that Athens would have gotten more booty, as well as more prestige, from their defeat of Persia at Eurymedon, for example, and the Athenian state was very concerned with financial planning and strategy, which probably led to fiscal success early on. What the allied states failed to recognize, then, was the magnitude of the costs required in the organization and administration of the Athenian hegemony. These costs were necessarily increased when allied states would revolt, but, as will be noted, it was primarily through new, harsher administrative policies, not through increased tribute, that the Athenians supported their maritime empire. The policies discussed above played a role in inciting allied revolts against Athens, even though democracy, not subordination in and of itself, was at the heart of the anger of the allies, as will be explored in the following chapter.

5. The Athenians Reestablished Order through Oaths

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73Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire*, 34.
The revolts of allied states caused the Athenian empire to reconsider its interstate arrangements, and re-tool its diplomacy to restore order to the hegemony. Clearly, the older arrangements between Athens and its allies were no longer effective, largely because of the fact that the Persian threat had been diminished, and, therefore, the motivation for an alliance of Greek states could have been considered by some to have become superfluous, as alliances of any scale were generally uncommon in the Greek world. The *summakhoi* arrangement presupposed that there was a common threat, while the *ekhthroi kai philoi* arrangement created an enemy through the extension of Athenian foreign policy to its allies. Both of these relationships were reactions to the political milieu. As the politics changed, the policies had to change as well. Here one can see that Athens was using oaths in order to implement political change within its alliance. These changing relationships between Athens and its Greek allies are attested most clearly by the oaths that were made between the states, rather than the Tribute Lists, although they have been considered by historians to provide the most important indications of growing Athenian power in the fifth century.

Similarly, it was through oaths, not through tribute, that Athens tightened its grip on subjected states in the Greek world. By tightening its hegemonic apparatus, Athens was able to maintain its hegemony and reestablish a renewed political order for the Delian League. The political arrangements illustrated by the later oaths of the Athenian hegemony (i.e. those formed in the period closer to the Peloponnesian war) assert the dominance of Athens as the champion of harmony.

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76 Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 208.
within an allied *polis*. Athens had its own interests in becoming a leading power in the Greek world, most notably in terms of promoting democracies and its own system of foreign policy. Athens reacted to their rebelling allies with harsh terms, and intended to use its position of strength within the Greek world as a place from which to affect political and social changes.
Chapter 2. The Political Significance of the Oaths

1. Introduction

In the period between the Persian wars and the Peloponnesian war, Athens began to reach a heightened level of political power. This new significance derived from Athenian leadership within the political construct known as the Delian League. Traditionally, scholars attributed the movement from the Delian League - an organization of states with relatively equal standing, to the arkhē of Athens, in which leadership (at least in some respects) rested in Athenian hands. The predominant leadership of Athens within the Delian League was symbolized by the movement of the organization’s treasury from the sacred island of Delos to Athens, and by the institution of new oaths between Athens and other members of the Delian League that specifically outlined mutual relationships between Athens and various allies in ways that seem increasingly subordinated. This subordination was the result of a single policy tendency, even though this tendency may have only been implemented in the cases of those states which had revolted from the Athenian hegemony. With this particular political policy, Athenian influence in the Aegean and in the Greek world in general become more predominant. This growing Athenian investment in democracy was related in some part to ongoing historical patterns of political life within the Greek polis, but it was also directly encouraged by the Athenian state. One might wonder, for instance, if some of the civil strife or stasis that took place in the pentekontaētia was a result of Athenian agitation and arousal of the masses rather than operating
as a solution for *stasis* that was created by other causes. The leadership of Athens meant that Greek states were being pushed towards democratically-based systems of governance, and away from regimes with less general decision-making processes, although such constitutions had seemingly brought Greek culture to its height. But was their persistence also tearing culture asunder? The oaths between Athens and its allies were central to these developments, and these oaths became both central to the continuation of the hegemony and agents of its demise.

2. Oaths & Athenian Political Ideology

The nature of the Athenian hegemony was not immediately offensive to the allied states. In fact, the early policies of Athens and the Delian League were indicative of mutual respect. There was indeed little that was intimidating about Athens’ foreign policy prior to the Peloponnesian war unless one was an aristocrat who feared the rising power of Athens. The early hegemony was largely characterized by peaceful negotiations and policy changes. Athens did not react harshly to allied states unless they revolted. Even so, the Athenian military tended to use an amount of force proportional to what they saw as the risk of losing that ally.\(^77\) Naturally, it became more difficult for Athens to handle their allies with minimal violence when states began to revolt as (and in large part, because) other allied states might be revolting at the same time.\(^78\) In instances where Athens considered their empire to be at risk, the outcome was brutal, and on occasion that outcome included the use of *andrapodismos*: the killing of all

\(^77\) Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire*, 46.
adult men and sale of all women and children into slavery. But this extreme practice was not at all characteristic of the hegemony’s political actions prior to the commencement of the Peloponnesian war. Why, then, did allied states revolt from the Athenian hegemony?

Allied states revolted from the Athenian state’s political control because of what they saw as growing political subordination. The Delian League was composed of an equal number of representatives from each polis, and each ambassador had one vote, a system that seems relatively straightforward. This system, some scholars argue, however, was characterized by the over-influence of Athens right from its establishment, which was manifested by Athenian “bullying” of the allied states. When discussing this, Balcer takes care to note that this intimidation was not direct or obvious. Rather he speculates that allied states were afraid of what the Athenians would do in reprisal for their voting against them. This roundabout argument may try too hard to create a clean causation and risk missing the point. It seems (from the oaths, for reasons which will be discussed below) that the nature of early Athenian imperialism was not concerned with reprisal, but was rather concerned with pushing for ideological changes. These allied states followed Athens not because of intimidation, but because they favored the Athenian policies, that included following up the defeat of the Persians with other political and military operations that were favorable not

80 Ibid., 11.
81 Thucydides 1.98.4: “Ναξίοις δὲ ἀποστάσι μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπολέμησαν καὶ πολιορκία παρεστήσαντο, πρῶτη τε αὕτη πόλις ἧμισας παρὰ τὸ καθεστηκὸς ἐδουλώθη, ἐπειτα δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὡς ἐκάστη ἐξονέβη”. See also 1.91.1 as in n. 99 below.
82 Balcer, The Athenian Regulations for Chalcis, 12.
only to the Athenians but also to many other members of the Delian League. It was only when Athens began pushing its own ideological policies that allied states began to feel increasing discord with the Athenian leadership. At first, this leadership worked subtly, and was aided by Athens’ great politicians and superior naval and bureaucratic administration. Of course, one must remember that the tributary policies of Athens, although not a form of intimidation, were extensive, and therefore financial concerns related to the tribute may have been a cause for allied disaffection.\footnote{Thucydides, 1.91.1: “αἰτίαι δὲ ἄλλαι τε ἦσαν τῶν ἀποστάσεων καὶ μέγιστα αἱ τῶν φόρων καὶ νεῶν ἐκδεια καὶ λειτουργίαν εἰ τῷ ἐγένετο: οἱ γὰρ Αθηναῖοι ἀκριβῶς ἔπρασσον καὶ λυπηροὶ ἦσαν οὐκ εἰσθόσιν οὐδὲ βουλομένοις ταλαιπωρεῖν προσάγοντες τὰς ἀνάγκας”.} This is only relevant, however, after the treasury moves to Athens in 454 B.C.E. or thereafter, and it remained an important reason for the allied revolts. These economic concerns existed among the allies alongside the more pressing concerns from the political ideology being pushed by the Athenian state.

The relationship between Athens and its allies was not initially so subordinate, and each polis had a set of obligations to maintain with regards to the other poleis involved. This relationship is of the sort that is displayed by the early oaths between the two polities. My view of the early oaths between Athens and its allies is largely based on Russell Meiggs’ scholarship on Athenian imperialism, and it is to him that I looked for an in-depth analysis of these allied concerns, especially for guidance with the epigraphic material, which is, of course, very fragmentary. He argues for a summakhoi (fighting alliance) arrangement at the start of the Delian League, a point which is based on
remaining evidence of all kinds.  Indeed, the early oaths between Athens and its allies did use the word “summakhos”, so that one would be wise to apply this term in order to describe the nature of the relationship.

Athens created an _ekthroi kai philoi_ arrangement with its allies, such as the one seen in the early oaths, in an attempt to maintain harmony by the oath-takers with the other allied states. The Athenians were reacting to a growing ideological change within Greece, namely the general movement towards democratically-based systems of government in direct opposition to leading aristocratic factions in many Greek states. Such political tensions were beginning to create conflict among different _poleis_, and the movement towards an _ekthroi kai philoi_ alliance meant that each state allied with Athens had to support Athenian foreign policy, i.e., it could not go to war against any other Athenian ally. This stymied the build-up of tension between the aristocratic and democratic factions of Greek _poleis_ which may have desired to pursue ancient enmities with each other (at least until the Peloponnesian war broke out in 431 B.C.E.). Naturally this type of _ekthroi kai philoi_ alliance pushed the allied states closer to democratic systems of government, as states were forced to become friends with other democratic states. This arrangement helped Athens in several ways. For one, it meant that allies did not tend to rebel in clusters, because an enemy of Athens immediately became an enemy of all of the allied states. Also,

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84 Meiggs, _The Athenian Empire_, 579-582.
85 The _ekthroi kai philoi_ arrangement is first seen in the Athenian regulations for Erythrae, in 453/2 B.C.E (SGHI #40). Afterwards, it appears in both the regulations for Colophon (SGHI #47) and Chalcis (SGHI #52).
it meant that Athens had more leverage in Greek affairs. With Persia having been defeated decisively, the Athenians desired to increase their power within the Greek world. Through the ekthroi kai philoi agreement, Athens created a large network of connections, possibly even to states outside of the purview of the Delian League, by virtue of mutual political alliances. Although the oaths specifically states that both Athens and the allied state must share the same friends and enemies, it seems likely that Athens was not forced to graft the foreign policy of the allies into their own interstate decisions, by virtue of Athens’ position as leader of the alliance. Nonetheless, Athens was required to assist militarily any allied state in good standing in its alliance that was suffering from an invasion. Still, Athens was not forced to take on the foreign policy of its allies in times of peace. It was the allied state that was subject to the ekthroi kai philoi arrangement. The change in agreement from focus on an alliance of summakhoi to ekthroi kai philoi arrangement meant that not only would it be necessary for allied states to fight alongside the Athenians, but also that allied states were compelled to consider Athenian foreign policies in their dealings with other Greek city-states.

The maintenance of harmony between the Greek allies, however briefly, was an essential component in the success of the Athenian state in the pentekontaētia. By swearing oaths that pushed Athenian foreign and ideological policy, Athens was making transformations in the Greek political world for its own benefit. Part of these arrangements consisted of an Athenian appeal to the

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86 Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 206.
_dēmos_ of the allied polis (if one can indeed call it an appeal). For example, versions of the words _boulē_ or council and _dēmos_, or the people, appear far more frequently in the later oaths than they do in the earlier oaths.\(^87\) In fact, the word _dēmos_ does not appear in the earliest existing oath, and its use (and, therefore, its significance, it is argued) may rise with each oath. More can be said on this point. These attempts towards creating peaceful, lasting alliances between Greek states of the Aegean were only partially and briefly successful. Nonetheless, this brief interlude of peace allowed the Athenian state to prosper and take on an added cultural and political significance in the Greek world. It also allowed Athens to leave such an impression on later scholars that they decided to preserve many Athenian works. The artistic and cultural production of Athens in the _pentekontaētia_ was foremost in Greece during this time period, largely by virtue of the fact that Athens had a mutually beneficial relationship with many Greek states.

In the end, Athens’ attempt to maintain harmony caused more issues within the Athenian hegemony than it solved. An important reason for the Athenians’ continued success as leaders of the hegemony was the result of their complex arrangements with allied states, all of which were carefully developed and show important developments in Athenian foreign policy. In a way, the Athenian _ekhthroi kai philoi_ arrangement could also be seen as a way to form a Greek alliance for the purpose of operating against another organization of Greek

\(^87\) For example, compare the oath between Athens and Egesta (_SGHI_ #37) with the oath between Athens and Colophon (_SGHI_ #47). There is significant changing in the wording from a vocabulary alluding to an aristocratic society to one which is more democratically-minded.
states, namely the Peloponnesian League. Therefore, while the *summakhoi* arrangement was a reaction to the Persian threat, the *ekhthroi kai philoi* agreement also subsumed a reaction to a perceived Greek threat from Sparta. This recalls to us the theme in Athenian policy that is first discussed by Thucydides right after the immediate Persian threat had receded, Themistocles began looking at the Spartans as potential enemies. Through these examples, one can see that oaths are an essential source for understanding the nature and meaning of interstate alliances and foreign policies within the Greek world. Also, one sees that the Athenians were using oaths as a fundamental tool in creating alliances that they perceived to have lasting outcomes. But these efforts ended up causing more problems than they fixed; allied states grew uncomfortable with these changes in traditional foreign policy, especially with regards to democracy.

3. Oaths & Democracy

The language of the oaths, which places a focus on the *dēmos* of the Greek cities involved, was likely regarded with contention by foreign aristocrats, who greatly feared giving the *dēmos* more power within their local political contexts. In one of the earliest oaths between Athens and a Delian League ally, the word *dēmos* does not appear. Rather it is the word *presbeis*, or ambassadors, that is used in reference to the act of swearing. Although some may argue that having the *presbeis* but not the *dēmos* swearing the oath is insignificant, I think rather

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88 Athenaiōn Politeia 23.5: “διὸ καὶ τοὺς φόρους οὗτος ἦν ὁ τάξας ταῖς πόλεσιν τοὺς πρῶτους, ἔτει τρίτῳ μετὰ τὴν ἐν Σαλαμίνι ναυμαχίαν, ἐπὶ Τιμοσθένους ἄρχοντος, καὶ τοὺς ὄρκους ὁμοσέν τοῖς Ἰωσίν, ὡστε τὸν αὐτὸν εὐθὺν εἶναι καὶ φίλον, ἄρ’ οἷς καὶ τοὺς μύδρους ἐν τῷ πελάγει καθεσίαν”.

that it shows, very clearly, that the earlier oaths were sworn between ambassadors of a given polity, rather than the people of that state, and therefore between mostly aristocratic, office-holding members of the elite (except in Athens, where even ambassadors were elected, though even here the affluent were over-represented). In this way, one can see a continuation of the old guest-friendship ideal exemplified as early as the Iliad and the Odyssey. The aristocrats were swearing on behalf of their people, perhaps with a limited responsiveness to the ideas of the dēmos itself (however difficult it may be now for us to gauge). As Athens rose in significance in the Delian League, it began to change its agreements in order to stress their own political ideologies. In the oath of Erythrae, which is usually dated to the year after the transfer of the treasury from Delos to Athens (453/2 B.C.E.) there are at least two different uses of the word dēmos or its derivatives. Additionally, the Athenian regulations for Erythrae do not mention the presbeis at all.89 The oath between Athens and Colophon in 447/6 B.C.E. shows a similar amount of emphasis on the word dēmos.90 It should be said that all of the occurrences of the word dēmos or dēmosia have at least two remaining letters on the stelae; in other words, although there are significant reconstructions to the inscriptions, the restorations in which this word is found are probable, as few other words could fit into the reconstruction in those places. The Erythrae decree is indeed highly reconstructed, by virtue of the fact that the only existing record of it is from a travelers’ notebook and that report does contain many probable errors. Although it is, in this case, difficult to place our faith in

89 SGHI #40.
90 SGHI #47.
the reported text of the Erythrae decree, it is important to note that all of the other, later oaths show an emphasis on the *dēmos* that is not present in earlier inscriptions. This shift in wording towards the *dēmos* is especially noticeable in the oath between Athens and Chalcis in 446/5 B.C.E., which is nearly complete. It contains ten references to the word *dēmos* or *demousia*, while there are only 4 references to a derivative of the word *presbeis*, in this case the related form *presbeian*, which still means “by the right of the elder” or ambassador.\(^{91}\) It makes sense that one should still see a form of the word *presbeis* in the decree, as each *dēmos* was not swearing the oath in entirety. Rather, the ambassadors were still swearing the oath, but this time it was for the entire *dēmos*. This change of wording shows a real change in Greek politics in which presumption in favor of democracy was becoming a part of inter-Hellenic political arrangements.

Using the word *dēmos* in their interstate alliances was an Athenian invention in the history of Greek interstate oaths. Some may argue that the stress on the word *dēmos* within the oaths between Athens and its allies may have been the unintentional result of the usage of Athenian political language within contexts that did not necessarily agree with the political ideology it entailed. The Athenian administration system, which by the 450’s B.C.E. was thoroughly democratic in outlook and practice, thanks to the policies of Ephialtes and Pericles. Therefore, many Athenian documents from this time period use the word *dēmos*, so that it may, in a sense, have become such a central aspect in Athenian procedure that the language carried over into the interstate alliances

\(^{91}\) *SGHI* #52.
which Athens made with the other Greek poleis. This ignores the fact that the word *dēmos* was virtually inexistent in Greek interstate oaths prior to its use by Athens in the *pentekontaētia*.\(^{92}\) This also mistakes the nature of the democracy by insinuating that the Athenian democracy was not truly aware of its own political ideology. This was not the case; indeed, the Athenians were very conscious of their political stances, so that it seems to be clear that this change was deliberate and had a major significance in the Greek political context.

4. Conclusion

The Athenian political system of democracy spread throughout the Greek world not necessarily because of efficiency or changing attitudes among the leaders of a particular state, but rather through Athenian influence. In fact, democracy was an unwieldy system of government that may not have had the advantage of efficiency everywhere. By using the word *dēmos* in its interstate alliances and changing what had been a set, formulaic composition of diplomatic oaths, Athens was promoting its own political ideologies through oaths. Oaths, like most types of inscribed diplomacy, tend to be formulaic in language, and as such, changes in wording or emphasis are extremely important in understanding the meaning of the oaths, particularly with an eye towards their continuity or change over time. One must remember that the use of the word *dēmos* and the *ekthroi kai philoi* agreement existed in tandem with each other, meaning that any

\(^{92}\) This argument is mainly supported by the lack of the word *dēmos* within the oaths of the Peloponnesian League and its absence from the decree with Egesta (Meiggs-Lewis #37). See also Sommerstein, *Oaths and the State*, 212-215.
enemy of the allied polis’ dēmos was an enemy of Athens itself. This also means that Athens was making a powerful statement by bringing the dēmos of its allied states into these agreements, especially in opposition to the previous abundance of the term presbeis. Athens was affecting the political atmosphere of the Greek world by bringing democracy to the forefront. It is likely that this Athenian influence led to increased democratic movements within the Greek world. All these examples highlight the fact that oaths were a harbinger of both success and defeat, and they had real political consequences for Greek poleis during the Classical age.
Chapter 3. Case Study: The Oath of Chalkis

I. Introduction.

The most complete oath between Athens and one of its Delian League allies is the oath of Chalkis dating to 446/5 B.C.E. This oath is extraordinarily intact; the letters are clear (for the most part) and most of the text survives. Additionally, there are few portions of the inscription which are disputable against the evidence of the clear-cut Attic letters. Most of the speculation involves translation rather than transcription (which is a wonderful situation), especially compared with the relative condition of some other oaths, such as that of Erythrae (which is, in fact, informed and reconstructed in large part by the survival of the Chalkidian oath). The oath of Chalkis contains two different sections. The first section outlines the stipulations that the Athenian boulē was expected to obey, and the second section outlines the requirements of Chalkis. Meiggs rightfully states that this oath “follows the pattern of the Erythraean and Colophonian oaths, but is more rigid and more detailed”. The oath of Chalkis is of exceptional importance because it illustrates, all at once, many of the different themes encapsulated by oaths which serve to define, in one way or another, the policy of the Athenian hegemony. This is partially a result of the revolt of Chalkis earlier in 446/5 B.C.E. This oath symbolizes a restructuring of a previous alliance after its terms.

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94 For contextual information on the oath of Chalkis, see SGHI, 138.
95 Meiggs, The Athenian Empire, 179
had been broken. In this way, the oath is more one-sided than the previous oaths, and is, therefore, indicative of Athens’ continued subordination of its previously autonomous allies. Part of the context of this oath is, therefore, that the Athenians have the upper-hand in the oath because they have subdued the revolt. The oath between Athens and Chalkis is indicative of the ekthroi kai philoi arrangement, and as such, it implies both an alliance between the states as well as the subordination of the Chalkidians.

2. The Stipulations of the Oath of Chalkis

The first part of the inscription, which outlines what the Athenian boule swears to do (or not do) on behalf of Chalkis, displays the full power of the Athenian state, as well as its expectations of interstate policies. It outlines that the Athenians should end their military sanctions on the Chalkidians, that the normal processes of justice shall take place, with no extreme measures (e.g., that capital punishment will not take place except following a trial), and that the Chalkidians may bring up cases before the Athenian people. While this may seem to be quite simply a return to harmoniē between the states, these clauses demonstrate how far the Athenians were willing to go in order to maintain their political hegemony by the 440’s B.C.E. Autonomy is an aspect of the previous relationship, and it is not mentioned, nor do any of these clauses allude to it. In fact, it seems that the Athenians are beginning to exhibit more oversight over their allies. These stipulations make it clear that Chalkis is expected not simply to fight

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96 See Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire*, 179
alongside the Athenians, but to take on a subordinate role. This section of the oath shows that the Athenians had considered extreme forms of punishment prior to their destruction of Mytilene and Melos during the Peloponnesian war. In this oath, one can see very clearly that the Chalkidians are become subjects, or *hypēkooi*, of the Athenians.

The second half of the oath, which outlines the requirements sworn by all Chalkidian males of military age is also indicative of the increased subordination of the Euboean state by the Athenians. In fact, this oath shows the imposition of rigid Athenian policies on the Chalkidians. The most immediate evidence for this judgment is that the allies do not appear in the oath with the Chalkidians, although they do appear in the earlier oaths with the Erythraeans and the Colophonians. A clause is added to the oath which states that “if anyone stirs up revolt against Athens I will denounce him”. 97 While the importance of this clause is mainly to prevent the loss of Chalkis as an ally of the Athenian state, it also suggests that the Athenians were concerned about the betrayal of the city to anti-democratic (i.e., aristocratic or oligarchic-leaning) factions. This helps prove that the Athenians were pushing their own social and political ideologies onto other states.

After the revolt and the subsequent oath, Chalkis was no longer merely a *summakhos*, a fighting-ally, but it was also (however reluctantly) integrated more deeply into the Athenian system. Additionally, the oath states that the Chalkidians “will pay such tribute as I can persuade the Athenians (to impose)”, which likely refers to the fact that the tribute would be readjusted after the

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97 *SGHI* #52, line 25.
reintegration of Chalkis into the hegemony.\textsuperscript{98} The subordination of the Chalkidians by the Athenians is clear, and indicative in the harsh terms of the oath sworn by the Chalkidian males. The language of the oath suggests that it was drawn up by the Athenians, and the Chalkidians may have had very little (if anything at all) say in its terms.

3. Conclusion

The oath of Chalkis shows the culmination of many themes in the oaths between Athens and its allies, and therefore reveals a great deal about the progression of the Athenian hegemony in the \textit{pentekontaētiea}. Most importantly, it reveals the changing relationship between Athens and its allies after the latter’s revolt from the hegemony. It is an important document not only because it is extant to a large degree, but also because it was a document held in high regards by both the Athenians and the Chalkidians, even if it was force rather than willing adherence that led to its acceptance by the state of Chalkis. This document hints at the harsher policies of the Athenian hegemony during the first Peloponnesian war (which had just concluded), and hints at how the unpopularity of Attic hegemony was a real diplomatic factor even outside Spartan propaganda. While this oath helped reintegrate Chalkis into the Athenian “system”, it did so with tough measures that would have likely been viewed by many Greeks with contention. This contention, in turn, could have contributed to the failure of the Athenian state. In this way, the oaths highlight both the apex of Athens’ power in

\textsuperscript{98} SGHI # 52, lines 25-27.
the Greek world, but they also hearken to its later demise. The fact that the oath was not sworn between aristocratic elites, as was common earlier in Greek history shows the prevalence and the importance of Athenian political ideology in Greek politics.
Conclusion: Oaths as a Tool of Empire

Oaths were a critical component of the administration of the Athenian hegemony, and the policies outlined by these oaths were sanctioned as divine and of supreme importance. They outlined the relationship between Athens and its allied states; these relationships progressed over time, following a general pattern away from autonomy, and towards the sole authority of Athens itself (at least in terms of interstate policy of allied states). Allied states consistently had some rights in these oaths, but these rights themselves were usually impositions of the Athenian system, which directly affected the allied states’ political policies. The oaths show that Athens was constantly revising its oaths in order to maintain more permanent relationships with their allies. When these relationships were threatened (by the waning Persian threat and by allied revolts), the policies became harsher in an attempt to keep the allied states more in line with Athenian policy, while those policies themselves underwent many drastic changes. This general pattern of change can best be described as a slow movement away from summakhoi, or fighting allies, towards hypēkooi, or subjects, as evidenced by the ekthroi kai philoi clause, which meant that the foreign policy of Athens (and similarly, its policy towards aristocratic and oligarchic factions within allied states) was forced upon the allies, making them more subordinate to the decisions of the Athenian boulē and assembly. The primary goal of Athens’ changing policies was to maintain harmoniē between the allies, and harmony was in part a product of Athens’ great wealth, which was afforded, in part, by allied money.
Nonetheless, this harmony would not last long, and in not much more than a
decade of the oath of Chalkis, Greece was in the midst of a devastating war which
broke down the democratic system which had been a hallmark of Athenian
politics and interstate policy.
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