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THE OATH OF MARATHON, NOT PLATAIA?

ABSTRACT

An oath on a 4th-century B.C. stele from Acharnai has previously been identified as the Oath of Plataia, the oath taken by the Greeks before they fought the Persians at Plataia in 479. In this article the author identifies it as the Oath of Marathon, rather than as the Oath of Plataia, and suggests that Lykourgos's reference (1.80) to "the oath that was traditional among you [Athenians]" is to this Oath of Marathon.

When Louis Robert first published a 4th-century B.C. inscription from Acharnai containing the "ancestral oath of the ephebes" and the "oath which the Athenians swore when they were about to fight against the barbarians," he identified the latter with the oath taken "at Plataia by all the Greeks when they were about to deploy and fight against the force of Xerxes," quoted by the orator Lykourgos just after he quotes the ephebic oath.[1] Scholars have debated whether or not the Oath of Plataia is a 4th-century forgery, but no one has questioned Robert's belief that the Oath of Plataia is the oath recorded in lines 23–46 of the Acharnai stele (Fig. 1). In a recent essay, Hans van Wees argues that various details in the inscribed oath point to Sparta, and suggests that the Spartans had the Greek allies take a traditional Spartan oath modified for the occasion in 479 B.C.[2] In van Wees's interpretation, the inscription records the oath taken at Plataia, which later Athenians such as Lykourgos altered to suit changed conditions in the 4th century.

Lykourgos, however, says that "the formulation [of the Greeks' oath at Plataia] was not their own but imitated the oath that was traditional among

1. Robert 1938, pp. 307–316; Lykourg. 1.76–77, 80–81. The inscription is most easily accessible in Rhodes-Osborne, *GHI* 88, and online in the new database of the Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece Project (http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/classics/oaths/database/index.php), where it is Oath ID 338 (accessed November 18, 2007).

I would like to thank Molly Richardson, James Sickinger, Michael Toumazou, and the two anonymous *Hesperia* reviewers, whose comments and questions on earlier drafts helped me to improve this essay. I owe a special debt to Hans van Wees for sending me a copy of his 2006 article so promptly; the idea that led to this article occurred to me while I was reading his. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

2. See van Wees 2006; of the earlier bibliography, Siewert 1972 remains the most detailed treatment.

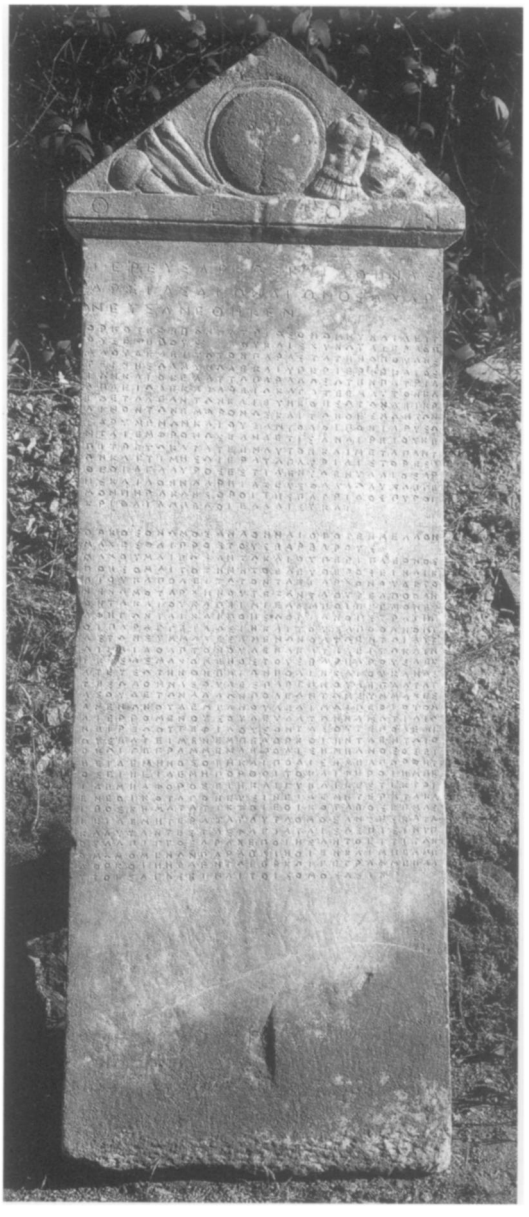

Figure 1. EFA I 7. Fourth-century B.C. stele from Acharnai. Photo courtesy École française d'Athènes

you [Athenians]" (1.80).[3] That assertion suggests that we ought to look for an Athenian precedent for the Oath of Plataia, or at least—allowing for an Athenian bias on Lykourgos's part—a precedent involving Athens. I would like to suggest that the Acharnai stele records that precedent rather than the Oath of Plataia itself.

3. Habicht (1961, p. 18) interprets Lykourgos as referring by "the oath that was traditional among you [Athenians]" to the ephebic oath, which he has just quoted. But as van Wees observes (2006, p. 126), the two oaths recorded in Lykourg. 1.76–77 and 81 have "next to nothing in common." Van Wees concludes that the Oath of Plataia did not have an Athenian model. I suggest instead that Lykourgos was *not* referring to the ephebic oath, which leaves open the possibility that the Oath of Plataia was modeled on a different Athenian oath.

Before discussing my reasons for rejecting the identification of the Acharnai oath as the Oath of Plataia, I first present the text and translation of the Acharnai oath followed by oaths from the Persian Wars known from literary sources.[4]

THE ACHARNAI OATH

ὅρκος ὃν ὤμοσαν Ἀθηναῖοι ὅτε ἤμελλον
μάχεσθαι πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους· *vvvvv*
μαχοῦμαι ἕως ἂν ζῶ, καὶ οὐ περὶ πλέονος
ποήσομαι τὸ ζῆν ἢ τὸ ἐλεύθερος εἶναι, κ-
αὶ οὐκ ἀπολείψω τὸν ταξίαρχον οὐδὲ τὸ-
ν ἐνωμοτάρχην οὔτε ζῶντα οὔτε ἀποθαν-
όντα, καὶ οὐκ ἄπειμι ἐὰμ μὴ οἱ ἡγεμόνες
ἀφηγῶνται, καὶ ποήσω ὅ τι ἂν οἱ στρατηγ-
οὶ παραγγείλωσιν, καὶ τοὺς ἀποθανόντ-
ας τῶν συμμαχεσαμένων θάψω ἐν τῶι αὐτ-
ῶι καὶ ἄθαπτον οὐδένα καταλείψω· καὶ ν-
ικήσας μαχόμενος τοὺς βαρβάρους δεκ-
ατεύσω τὴν Θηβαίων πόλιν, καὶ οὐκ ἀνασ-
τήσω Ἀθήνας οὐδὲ Σπάρτην οὐδὲ Πλαται-
ὰς οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων τῶν συμμαχεσ-
αμένων οὐδεμίαν, οὐδὲ λιμῶι περιόψομ-
αι ἐργομένους οὐδὲ ὑδάτων ναματιαίω-
ν εἴρξω οὔτε φίλους ὄντας οὔτε πολεμί-
ους. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἐμπεδορκοίην τὰ ἐν τῶι ὅ-
ρκῶι γεγραμμένα, ἡ πόλις ἡμὴ ἄνοσος εἴ-
η, εἰ δὲ μή, νοσοίη· καὶ πόλις ἡμὴ ἀπόρθητ-
ος εἴη, εἰ δὲ μή, πορθοῖτο· καὶ φέροι ἡμή, ε-
ἰ δὲ μή, ἄφορος εἴη· καὶ γυναῖκες τίκτοι-
εν ἐοικότα γονεῦσιν, εἰ δὲ μή, τέρατα· κα-
ὶ βοσκήματα τίκτοι ἐοικότα βοσκήμασ-
ι, εἰ δὲ μή, τέρατα. ταῦτα ὀμόσαντες κατὰ-
καλύψαντες τὰ σφάγια ταῖς ἀσπίσιν ὑπ-
ὸ σάλπιγγος ἀρὰν ἐποιήσαντο, εἴ τι τῶν
ὀμωμομένων παραβαίνοιεν καὶ μὴ ἐμπε-
δορκοῖ(ε)ν τὰ ἐν τῶι ὅρκωι γεγραμμένα, α-
ὐτοῖς ἄγος εἶναι τοῖς ὀμόσασιν. *vacat*

Oath which the Athenians swore when they were
about to fight against the barbarians.
I shall fight while I live, and I shall not put
life before being free *(eleutheros),* and
I shall not desert the *taxiarchos* nor the
enômotarchês, neither while they live nor when they are dead,
and I shall not depart unless the leaders *(hêgemones)*
lead the way, and I shall do whatever the
generals *(stratêgoi)* command, and I shall bury

4. Text and translation from Rhodes-Osborne, *GHI* 88. One important difference in their text from that of Tod (*GHI* 204) is that they accept Daux's reading of ταξίαρχον in line 25 (Daux 1965, p. 85), where Tod printed Robert's ταξίλοχον. I have reformatted the translation to make the lines follow the Greek as closely as possible.

in the same place the dead of those who were allied,
and I shall leave no one unburied. And when
I have been victorious fighting against the barbarians,
I shall (totally destroy and) dedicate a tenth of the city of the Thebans,
and I shall not raze Athens or Sparta or Plataea
or any of the other cities that were allied,
and I shall not overlook those who are
oppressed by hunger and I shall not keep
them from running water, whether they are friends or
enemies. And if I keep true to what has been written in
the oath may my city be free from sickness,
if not, may it be sick; and may my city be unravaged,
but if not, may it be ravaged; and may my <land> bear,
but if not, may it be barren; and may the women bear
children like their parents, but if not, monsters; and
may the animals bear young like the animals,
but if not, monsters. They swore these oaths, covered
the sacrificial victims with their shields and
at the sound of the trumpet made a curse: if they
transgressed what was sworn and did not keep true
to what had been written in the oath, a
curse was to be upon the very people that had sworn.

GREEK OATHS FROM THE PERSIAN WARS

Literary sources record several separate but similar oaths from the time of the Persian Wars. Best known is the oath that Lykourgos says the Greeks exchanged at Plataia in 479 B.C.:

> I shall not value life more than freedom *(eleutheria),* and I shall not abandon the leaders *(hêgemones)* whether they are alive or dead. I shall bury all those allies *(summachoi)* killed in the battle. And when I have conquered the barbarians in war, I shall not destroy any of the cities that have fought for Greece, but I shall (destroy and) dedicate a tenth of (the property belonging to) all those cities that sided with the barbarian. And I shall not rebuild a single one of the shrines that have been burned and razed by the barbarians, but shall allow them to remain for future generations as a memorial of the barbarians' impiety.[5]

Diodoros, probably relying on the 4th-century B.C. historian Ephoros, reports a similar oath exchanged by the Greeks when they assembled at the Isthmus prior to the battle at Plataia:

> I shall not value life more than freedom *(eleutheria),* and I shall not abandon the leaders *(hêgemones)* whether they are alive or dead. I shall bury all those allies *(summachoi)* killed in the battle, and when I have conquered the barbarians in war, I shall not destroy

5. Lykourg. 1.81: Οὐ ποιήσομαι περὶ πλείονος τὸ ζῆν τῆς ἐλευθερίας, οὐδ' ἐγκαταλείψω τοὺς ἡγεμόνας οὔτε ζῶντας οὔτε ἀποθανόντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας τῶν συμμάχων ἅπαντας θάψω. καὶ κρατήσας τῷ πολέμῳ τοὺς βαρβάρους, τῶν μὲν μαχεσαμένων ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος πόλεων οὐδεμίαν ἀνάστατον ποιήσω, τὰς δὲ τὰ τοῦ βαρβάρου προελομένας ἁπάσας δεκατεύσω. καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐδὲν ἀνοικοδομήσω παντάπασιν, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις ἐάσω καταλείπεσθαι τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας.

> any of the cities that have struggled together, and I shall not rebuild a single one of the sanctuaries that have been burned or demolished, but shall allow them to remain for future generations as a reminder of the barbarians' impiety.[6]

Diodoros omits the pledge to destroy the cities that went over to the barbarians, a promise that he elsewhere says the allies had voted a year earlier, before the battle of Thermopylai in 480 B.C.:

> The Greeks who were meeting at the Isthmus voted to (destroy and) dedicate to the gods, after their victory in the war, a tenth of (the property belonging to) the Greeks who voluntarily chose the cause of the Persians.[7]

Here Diodoros is consistent with our earliest source, Herodotos, who paraphrases an oath sworn before the battle of Thermopylai:

> Against all of these (peoples who gave earth and water to the Persians) the Greeks who declared war against the barbarian entered into a sworn agreement. The oath was as follows: After the successful conclusion of the war, they would (destroy and) dedicate to the god at Delphi a tenth of (the property belonging to) the Greeks who surrendered to the Persian voluntarily.[8]

DISCUSSION

Like the oaths from the Persian Wars found in Lykourgos and Diodoros, the Acharnai oath pledges one to fight as long as one is alive, to stay with the officers, to bury allies, to preserve the allies' cities, and to destroy any city that joined the Persians and dedicate a tenth of its property. Nevertheless, the Acharnai oath differs in some interesting ways.

- Line 24: Instead of the abstract noun *eleutheria,* the Acharnai oath uses the adjective *eleutheros.*
- Lines 25–26: Instead of promising simply not to abandon the leaders *(hêgemones),* the Acharnai oath specifies the *taxiarchos* and the *enômotarchês.*
- Line 30: Instead of referring to the dead of the allies *(summachoi),* the Acharnai oath mentions the dead τῶν συμμαχεσαμένων, which might be translated as "of the fellow-fighters" in order to bring out the difference.

6. Diod. Sic. 11.29.3: οὐ ποιήσομαι περὶ πλείονος τὸ ζῆν τῆς ἐλευθερίας, οὐδὲ καταλείψω τοὺς ἡγεμόνας οὔτε ζῶντας οὔτε ἀποθανόντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας τῶν συμμάχων πάντας θάψω, καὶ κρατήσας τῷ πολέμῳ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐδεμίαν τῶν ἀγωνισαμένων πόλεων ἀνάστατον ποιήσω, καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων οὐδὲν ἀνοικοδομήσω, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγινομένοις ἐάσω καὶ καταλείψω τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας.

7. Diod. Sic. 11.3.3: οἱ δ' ἐν Ἰσθμῷ συνεδρεύοντες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐψηφίσαντο τοὺς μὲν ἐθελοντὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἑλομένους τὰ Περσῶν δεκατεῦσαι τοῖς θεοῖς, ἐπὰν τῷ πολέμῳ κρατήσωσι.

8. Hdt. 7.132.2: ἐπὶ τούτοισι οἱ Ἕλληνες ἔταμον ὅρκιον οἱ τῷ βαρβάρῳ πόλεμον ἀειράμενοι. τὸ δὲ ὅρκιον ὧδε εἶχε, ὅσοι τῷ Πέρσῃ ἔδοσαν σφέας αὐτοὺς Ἕλληνες ἐόντες, μὴ ἀναγκασθέντες, καταστάντων σφι εὖ τῶν πρηγμάτων, τούτους δεκατεῦσαι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖσι θεῷ.

Lines 30–31: Instead of promising simply to bury these dead, the Acharnai oath pledges that they will be buried *in the same place,* that is, the same place where they died.[9]

Line 33: Instead of promising the destruction of all the cities that sided with the Persians, the Acharnai oath mentions only Thebes.

Lines 33–36: Instead of promising not to raze any of the cities that fought against the Persians, the Acharnai oath names Athens, Sparta, and Plataia and adds "or any of the other cities that were allied."

Lines 41–42: Instead of promising never to rebuild the sanctuaries that the Persians have destroyed, the Acharnai oath expresses the wish that the oath-taker's city be unravaged.

As Rhodes and Osborne have noted, these differences show that the Acharnai oath must have derived from a documentary source rather than from the surviving literary versions of the Oath of Plataia.[10] I would go further and argue that the inscription records not the Oath of Plataia, but an oath sworn on an earlier occasion.

Take the last difference first. It would be odd for the Athenians in 479 to hope that Athens would be unravaged, after it had been burned twice. The Acharnai oath makes better sense if it was sworn *before* the Persians burned the Athenians' sanctuaries and ravaged their land, rather than at Plataia.

Second, why are Athens, Sparta, and Plataia—and only Athens, Sparta, and Plataia—named? The Serpent Column, the monument erected at Delphi immediately after the victory at Plataia, listed all 31 Greek allies, starting with the Spartans, Athenians, and Corinthians.[11] Plataia was fourteenth. Similarly, the offering to Zeus dedicated at Olympia after the battle listed the participants, beginning with the Spartans and the Athenians, and Plataia was fourteenth in this list, too (Paus. 5.23). Why would the Acharnai oath specify Athens, Sparta, and Plataia? One would expect either all of the cities to be listed, as on the Serpent Column and the offering to Zeus, or none of the cities to be specified individually, as in the literary versions of the Oath of Plataia. The Acharnai oath reads like an oath composed by the Athenians, Spartans, and Plataians for an occasion when they expected to fight but were not sure others would join them. Was there such an occasion when Athens, Sparta, and Plataia faced the barbarians alone? Yes—or rather there would have been, had the Spartans arrived a day earlier in 490 B.C. for the battle of Marathon. This earlier occasion also explains the order of the names in the oath. One would expect Sparta to be first on a list composed in 479 B.C., while Athens would naturally receive priority in 490 B.C. when the fighting was expected to be in Athenian territory.

9. A reader suggested that "in the same (place)" might mean "in the same tomb," that is, a communal burial. Neither at Marathon nor at Plataia were all the dead buried together: at Marathon there was one mound for the Athenians and another for the Plataians and the slaves (Paus. 1.32.3), and at Plataia the Greeks buried their dead in separate mounds for each city (Hdt. 9.85). I follow Fornara (1977, pp. 56–57, no. 57) and van Wees (2006, pp. 126, 132–133), who translate the phrase "on the spot." Pritchett (1985, pp. 116–117) also understands the phrase as referring to burial on the battlefield.

10. Rhodes-Osborne, *GHI,* pp. 446–447.

11. Meiggs-Lewis, *GHI*^{2} 27.

Third, a pledge to bury the dead where they died (lines 30–31) recalls specifically the battle of Marathon, as Thucydides reports that the Athenians traditionally brought their war dead back to Athens for burial, but made an exception for those who fought at Marathon.[12]

Fourth, the reference in line 30 to "fellow-fighters" fits the situation at Marathon better than at Plataia, because it would apply to "comrades from one's own community" as well as to allies from other cities.[13] Freed slaves fought with the Athenians at Marathon, and those who died were buried in a mound together with the Plataian dead (Paus. 1.32.3, 7.15.7).

Fifth, a pledge not to desert the *taxiarchos* and the *enômotarchês* (lines 25–26) sounds odd for Plataia. As Peter Siewert has pointed out,[14] an *enômotarchês* commanded the smallest unit in the Spartan army, consisting of 32–40 men. But a *taxiarchos* commanded one of the 10 Athenian tribal contingents, or about 800 men at Plataia where the Athenians had 8,000 total (Hdt. 9.28.6)—not the smallest unit in the Athenian army at Plataia, where Olympiodoros son of Lampon was a *lochagos* or leader of a *lochos,* in this case of 300 men (Hdt. 9.21.3). Why does the pledge not make reference to the *lochagos*? Siewert's explanation (that the Athenians felt closer to their *taxiarchos,* whom they elected, than to their *lochagos,* whom the *taxiarchos* appointed) is not convincing. Because an oath such as this aimed at cohesion, and because cohesion in armed forces means above all loyalty to the men close by, we would expect the Oath of Plataia to pair *enômotarchês* and *lochagos.* Perhaps, though, the Athenian *lochos* did not yet exist in 490 B.C., so that the *taxiarchos* commanded the smallest unit of the Athenians.

Sixth, singling out Thebes for destruction (line 33) would be more understandable in 490 B.C. than in 479, since the Greeks swore in 480 to destroy *all* the cities that submitted voluntarily to the Persians (Hdt. 7.132.2). Although Herodotos does not say the oath mentioned them by name, Herodotos 7.132.1 lists the Thessalians, Dolopes, Enienes, Perrhaibians, Lokrians, Magnesians, Melians, Achaians of Phthia, Thebans, and all the Boiotians except the men of Thespiai and Plataia. Van Wees suggests that the purpose of the clause in the Acharnai oath was to bind the Greeks to an immediate assault on Thebes as soon as they defeated the Persians in 479,[15] but this suggestion is not compelling. Why would the coalition forces ignore all the other transgressors? In 490, on the other hand, there might well have been bitter feelings toward Thebes. Although Herodotos's account of the events leading up to the battle of Marathon focuses on the Aiginetans, he does mention that some mainland Greek cities offered earth and water to the Persians (6.49). Thebes might have been one of them, just as it was in 480. Since the former tyrant Hippias was accompanying the Persians, his father's connections with Thebes might also be relevant: Peisistratos had received help from Thebes (Hdt. 1.61.3; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.2). Athenians might have suspected the Thebans of supporting Hippias's return to power. Peisistratos had received help from Eretria too, which would explain concerns about Eretria's loyalty (Hdt. 1.61.2, 6.100; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.2).

Athens and Thebes had come into conflict several times in the generation before Marathon. In 519 B.C.,[16] the Plataians asked the Athenians to help them against Thebes. The Athenians sent troops and a battle was about

12. Thuc. 2.34.5. This passage has been extensively debated since F. Jacoby (1938) argued that burial on the spot was normal for Athenians until the 460s. For more recent bibliography, see Hornblower 1991, pp. 292–294. Marathon was not the only exception to Thucydides' rule. It may, however, have been the first collective burial outside Athens. Herodotos (1.30.5) records only an earlier case of an individual (Tellos) buried on the spot, and the Simonides epigram recording a public burial near the Euripos (Page 1975, p. 9, no. 2), if it does refer to the battle of 506 B.C. (see below), might refer to the Thebans or the Chalkidians rather than to the Athenians. So while Marathon is not the only exception (Hdt. 9.85 records a famous later one in the collective Athenian burial after the battle of Plataia), it might have been the first and most important.

13. Siewert 1972, pp. 24, 86–87; van Wees 2006, p. 133.

14. Siewert 1972, pp. 58–59.

15. See van Wees 2006, pp. 136–139.

16. The date comes from Thucydides (3.68.5), not Herodotos. Against proposed emendations of Thucydides' "93rd" to "83rd," "73rd," or even "53rd," which would move the date down to 509, 499, or 479 B.C., see the compelling note by Hornblower (1991, pp. 464–465).

to begin when the Corinthians intervened. Although the Thebans agreed to the border established by the Corinthians, they attacked the Athenians during their withdrawal and were defeated (Hdt. 6.108). In 506 B.C., the Thebans joined a three-pronged invasion of Attica (Hdt. 5.74–77). While Kleomenes and Demaratos led a force of Spartans and Peloponnesian allies from the west, the Thebans attacked from the north, capturing the border villages of Oinoe and Hysiai, and the Chalkidians came in from the northeast and began to ravage Athenian land.

The Athenians first confronted the Spartans at Eleusis, and after dissension led to the Peloponnesians' withdrawal, the Athenians marched against Chalkis. When the Thebans came to the straits to support the Chalkidians, the Athenians engaged and defeated the Thebans, killing many and capturing 700. On the same day the Athenians crossed over to Euboia and defeated the Chalkidians as well, taking more prisoners. They subsequently imposed 4,000 settlers *(klêrouchoi)* on Chalkis. From a tenth of the ransom accepted for the prisoners, they erected a bronze four-horse chariot on the Acropolis as an offering to Athena.[17] Later the Thebans invaded Attica again and were defeated again, after which they turned to the Aiginetans for help. The Aiginetans responded by raiding Athenian territory, the start of a long "undeclared" war between Athens and Aigina (Hdt. 5.79–81). Lingering resentment from these incidents could explain the formulation of an oath in 490 to obliterate Thebes.

An inscribed column excavated a few years ago in Thebes might refer to a very recent episode that Herodotos does not mention. The text, inscribed in letters of Late Archaic form, reads as follows:

. . .]ος FΟινόας και Φυλας
. . .]ελόντες κ(αι) Ελευσίνα
. . .]αι Χαλκίδα λυσάμενοι
. . .]μωι ανέθειαν

Vasilis Aravantinos has interpreted the inscription as a dedication made after the 506 B.C. invasion of Attica, representing the Boiotians' version of what happened (a limited success, from their point of view).[18] Kurt Raaflaub suggested instead that λυσάμενοι refers to the liberation of Chalkis, that is, the expulsion of the Athenian *klêrouchoi*.[19] It seems possible that while Athens was distracted by Aigina in 490 B.C., the Thebans took the field against Athens yet again.[20] If this invasion compelled the Athenians to withdraw from Chalkis, that would explain why the 4,000 Athenian *klêrouchoi* were available to be sent to help Eretria when the Persians landed

17. For a base, or rather two bases, with the inscription recorded by Herodotos (one with the two hexameters transposed), see *IG* I^3 501 = Meiggs-Lewis, *GHI*^{2} 15.

18. The text given here is that presented by Whitley (2005, p. 46), who quotes a report by Aravantinos and publishes a photograph (fig. 80). A fuller publication is expected to appear in the proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy held in Barcelona in 2002.

19. Raaflaub 2004, p. 117.

20. On Athens and Aigina, see Hdt. 6.49–94.1. Many scholars have questioned whether all the disputes and fighting described here can fit into the interval between Dareios's demand for earth and water (6.48) and the battle of Marathon. I believe that they can, if Dareios's heralds actually went to Greece before Mardonios's campaign in 492 (so Rhodes 2003). Even if all the fighting between Athens and Aigina took place after the battle of Marathon (as preferred by Scott [2005, pp. 546–552, with references to earlier studies]), Athens' appeal to Sparta for help against Aigina, Kleomenes' two invasions of Aigina, and the deposition of Aiginetan hostages all happened no later than the spring of 490 B.C. These actions alone might have spurred the Thebans into action.

(Hdt. 6.100.1), and why the Athenians might well have been furious enough to want Thebes destroyed.[21]

One last difference between the Acharnai oath and the literary versions of the Oath of Plataia, the first one noted above, points to Marathon as a more appropriate occasion for the inscribed oath. Because Thucydides writes (2.71.2) that after the battle of Plataia the Spartan king Pausanias sacrificed to Zeus Eleutherios, the adjective *eleutheros* in line 24 of the Acharnai oath might bring Plataia to mind. But the distinction between slave and free in war preceded Marathon too, as Herakleitos's famous lines show.[22] In fact, if the Persian war epigrams refer exclusively to Marathon, the connection between (avoiding) slavery and Marathon is explicit.[23] There is, I think, no difficulty in believing that Greeks used the word *eleutheros* in an oath before Marathon. The contrast in language with the literary versions of the Oath of Plataia may be significant, for if the Oath of Plataia did use *eleutheria,* it would be one of the earliest known occurrences of the abstract noun, which is not otherwise securely attested until Pindar's *Isthmian* 8 in 478 B.C.[24] It would not be surprising if an earlier oath was more concrete.

Despite the heading in lines 21–22, several points suggest that the oath was not a purely Athenian oath, but rather the oath of an alliance:

1. A military officer called an *enômotarchês* is well attested for Sparta and is only attested for Sparta. The references to *taxiarchos* and generals *(stratêgoi)* suit Athens, and the leaders *(hêgemones)* would include the Athenian *polemarchos* Kallistratos, but it seems unlikely that Athens had sworn bands *(enômotiai).*
2. It would be odd for the Athenians to swear not to destroy their own city ("un peu comique," Robert called it), but natural to list Athens, Sparta, and Plataia in an oath to be taken by citizens of all three.
3. The oath was written (lines 39–40, 50), which suggests that it was worked out in diplomatic negotiations and taken to the three cities for their soldiers to swear as they prepared to depart.

When would the Athenians have sent ambassadors to ask for help and negotiate this oath? Herodotos mentions only the request to Sparta delivered by the runner Pheidippides (6.105–106), which he places after the Persians landed at Marathon (6.102) but before the Athenians left the city. The fact that the Plataians came to Marathon shows that there was at

21. Van Wees (2006, p. 136) points out that "the Thebans to be tithed" became proverbial in Athens (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.20, 6.5.35), which ought to mean that there was an oath with this provision separate from the Oath of Plataia.

22. "War is father of all, king of all; and some he shows as gods, others as men, some he makes slaves, others free" (Diels-Kranz 22b53, late 6th century B.C.).

23. See Matthaiou 2003, pp. 194–202, on *IG* I^3 503/504 (Meiggs-Lewis, *GHI*^{2} 26). Matthaiou (2004) stresses that the text of Agora I 4256, which B. D. Meritt (1956) believed was a 4th-century B.C. copy of the first epigram, does not overlap with it and is therefore not a copy. Tracy (2004) identifies the cutter of Agora I 4256 with the cutter of *IG* II^2 913, and therefore dates it to about 190 B.C. The significance of these articles is to remove from the restoration of the first epigram the phrase "on swift ships," which had been seen as an obstacle to the view that the epigram concerned Marathon.

24. Raaflaub 2004, pp. 61–62. The earliest occurrence of *eleutheria* would be line 15 of the Themistokles Decree (Meiggs-Lewis, *GHI*^{2} 23), if only we could be certain that the word was used in 480 B.C. For later inscriptions connecting *eleutheria* with Marathon, see Agora I 7529 (176/5 B.C., as cited in Matthaiou 2003, p. 197), *IG* II^2 1006 (122/1 B.C.), and *IG* II^2 2788 (end of the 2nd century B.C.).

least one other Athenian request. Plato says that the Athenians sent requests for help "in all directions" (παντα χόσε) when they received a message from Datis that he had captured and "netted" Eretria.[25] The reference in the Acharnai oath to "other cities that were allied" (or "that fought together," lines 35–36) supports Plato's story. Though no source mentions earlier conversations, the Athenians probably talked to their friends earlier, too. The Eretrians appealed to Athens for help more than a week before the Persians landed at Marathon (Hdt. 6.100–102). No doubt the Athenians had heard earlier still about the Persian attacks on Karystos, Delos, and Naxos, and I suspect that they learned about the Persian force even when it was still gathering in Cilicia. The exact moment when they realized that Datis's instructions were to enslave the Eretrians and the Athenians cannot be known, but the landing at Marathon was not a surprise attack. Pheidippides' message may only have been the last of a series of communications, and may have amounted to: "They've landed; come now."

How did Dion son of Dion from Acharnai, a priest of Ares and Athena Areia, come to inscribe this oath together with the ephebic oath on a stele as a dedication, with a pediment above containing a set of military equipment (a round hoplite shield flanked by a Corinthian helmet and a pair of greaves on one side and a corselet and some other object, perhaps a cloak, on the other)? Noting that the earliest known quotation of the ephebic oath was by Aischines in a speech urging action against Philip II of Macedon in 348 B.C. (Dem. 19.303), Rhodes and Osborne follow Robert in dating the inscription to the third quarter of the 4th century. They interpret the dedication as Dion's attempt to spur fellow citizens into action against Philip by reminding them of past Athenian success.[26] Van Wees, noting the particular hostility to Thebes in the oath, prefers to follow Georges Daux in advocating a slightly earlier date, in the second quarter of the 4th century when the Athenians and Spartans became allies against Thebes for the first time since the Persian Wars.[27] In her study of Attic documentary reliefs, Carol Lawton comments that "there is little in the style of the relief to argue decisively for one date or the other," though she inclines toward the later one.[28] Like van Wees, I am particularly struck by the fact that Xenophon twice refers to the hope that the Thebans would be tithed, as the old expression went (*Hell.* 6.3.20, 6.5.35), and prefer a date in the second quarter of the 4th century. After the Thebans fought with the Athenians against the Macedonians at Chaironeia in 338, and especially after Alexander destroyed Thebes in 335, recalling the Oath of Marathon would have been inappropriate, and in 331 Lykourgos accordingly cited the Oath of Plataia instead.

How Dion got his text of the oath is a subject for speculation. James Sickinger recently remarked, quite sensibly, that "authentic records can be just as valuable in promoting patriotism as forged ones." In his study of public archives in Athens, he concludes that in the late 6th century B.C. Athenian officials began to keep at least some records.[29] Dion may have found a copy of the original decree calling for the Athenians to make an alliance with the Spartans, Plataians, and anyone else who would fight, and to swear a common oath. Comparisons with other alliances and agreements inscribed in the 5th century B.C. suggest that the document might have included (1) a decree with a statement of the alliance and provisions for

25. Pl. *Leg.* 698d and, by implication, *Menex.* 240c. Both passages ignore the Plataians' positive response.

26. Rhodes-Osborne *GHI,* pp. 447–448.

27. See van Wees 2006, p. 152.

28. Lawton 1995, p. 155.

29. Sickinger 1999, pp. 35–61. The quotation appears on p. 43.

swearing the oath, and (2) the text of the oath. Dion might have quoted the text of the oath and appended, on the basis of the provisions in the decree, a description of how the oath was sworn.[30] This procedure would produce the text that we now read, which sounds redundant when the oath ends with a string of curses and then the description of the swearing ceremony summarizes the curse. Dion might have found all of this information in one document.

This decree might in fact have been the motion of Miltiades, calling (in addition) for the Athenians to bring provisions and take the field, and to free those of their slaves who were capable of fighting.[31] Of course these decisions might have been separate motions, and the name of Miltiades might have been erroneously attached to them. But someone had to make the proposals, and why not the man later credited with the leading role in the victory? If Miltiades did propose the Acharnai oath, and if it was inscribed in the second quarter of the 4th century B.C., then Aischines was not the first to link the ephebic oath and the Miltiades decree (Dem. 19.303). Dion had done it before him. If Dion had his inscription cut after Aischines' speech in 348 B.C., then the influence probably went in the other direction.

CONCLUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

The barbarians against whom the Athenians swore the oath inscribed on the Acharnai stele are more likely to have been led by Datis in 490 B.C. than by Mardonios in 479. The extreme circumstances faced by the Athenians before their victory at Marathon would have encouraged them to take extraordinary steps to find more troops and to encourage everyone to remain loyal. The Acharnai stele preserves the promises they made to the Spartans, the Plataians, any other Greeks who came to fight on their side (none, in the event), and not least to each other and the slaves they freed. Presumably the Plataians swore the oath before departing from their city, and the 2,000 Spartans as well, even though they arrived after the battle. Given the Athenians' tendency to think of themselves as having fought alone at Marathon, it is entirely plausible that Lykourgos could refer to an Athenian-Spartan-Plataian oath as "the oath that was traditional among you [Athenians]." Lykourgos meant that the Greek allies used the Oath of Marathon as a template for their Oath of Plataia.

This interpretation does not undermine van Wees's suggestion that the oath was shaped in part by the Spartans, but it implies that the Acharnai stele does not tell us as much about Archaic Sparta as van Wees has suggested. The inscription says that the Athenians used the ritual described in lines 46–51, for example, and we cannot be sure that the Spartans used the same ritual, or that the oath and the ritual were traditional among the Spartan "sworn bands."

Finally, if the arguments presented here are correct, the authenticity of the Oath of Plataia should be debated without worrying about whether the literary versions are consistent with the Acharnai oath. The inscription found at Acharnai is evidence for an Oath of Marathon sworn in 490 B.C., not for the Oath of Plataia sworn in 479 B.C.[32]

30. See, e.g., the regulations for Erythrai, *IG* I^3 14 (= Meiggs-Lewis, *GHI*^{2} 40).

31. Arist. *Rh.* 1411a10; Paus. 7.15.7. For a succinct discussion of the Miltiades decree and the issue of its historicity, see Hamel 1998, pp. 164–167.

32. The main argument remaining against the authenticity of the Oath of Plataia is an argument from silence, assuming that it is inconceivable that Isokrates knew about the oath but did not mention it in 380 B.C. when he wrote 4.156, or that Thucydides knew about the oath but did not mention it when he wrote 3.57.2. Such arguments are indecisive. What one scholar finds inconceivable, another finds reasonable (e.g., Meiggs 1972, pp. 504–507). Nor am I much impressed by Theopompos's denial of the Oath of Plataia, which he may have based on nothing more than the letter forms, as in his denial of the Peace of Kallias (*FGrH* 115 F153, 154). He may have been looking at an inscription cut in the 4th century, but that does not prove it a fabrication. It might have been a copy.

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