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**City-Destruction in Athenian and Theban Social Memory**

At the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Thebans and Corinthians proposed to destroy Athens and enslave its population (Xen.*Hell.* 2.2.19f.). Although this proposal was made far away in Sparta and not carried out, its persistence in Athenian social memory is remarkable; it is e.g. brought up by Theban ambassadors in 395 (Xen.*Hell.* 3.5.8); by the Spartans in 370 (Xen.*Hell.* 6.5.35, 46); by Andoc. 3.21, Isoc. 14.31f., 7.6, 15.319, and Dem. 19.65f. This paper seeks to explain the persistence of this historical paradigm in public discourse, by exploring its emotional power, which depends on the visual component of this memory. The memory of razing a Greek city extends back through the Peloponnesian and Persian Wars to the destruction of Crisa.

Scholars have extensively studied the orators' use of the past, focusing on narrative-rhetorical aspects (Jost 1935, Nouhaud 1982), the orators' sources, and their immediate political concerns (Pearson, *CP* 1941, Perlman, *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 1961). The concept of social memory, however, has not received enough attention as a useful analytical tool (cf. Thomas 1989, 1992; Fentress & Wickham 1992).

The deep emotional impact which the Theban proposal had on the Athenian collective consciousness is evident from the Theban request of an alliance in 395. In Xenophon, the Theban ambassadors devote their very first argument to this incident (*Hell.* 3.5.8). 25 years later, the Spartans utilize the very same incident to win Athenian support against Thebes (Xen.*Hell.* 6.5.35, 46). Further allusions confirm the Athenians' familiarity with this incident (Andoc. 3.21; Isoc. 14.31f.; 7.6; 15.319, Dem. 19.65f).

This familiarity can only be explained by the monstrosity of this proposal, the mere threat of which can persist in a society's collective historical consciousness (for persistence in memory cf. Schacter 2001, 161ff.). Granted, minor Greek cities had been destroyed and enslaved before (e.g. Plataea in 427), but to eradicate a city like Athens or Thebes was on another scale. Alexander's annihilation of Thebes left a deep mark in Greek historical consciousness (cf. Worthington *CQ* 1991, 93), as is evident from contemporary testimonies (Aeschin. 3.128, 133, 156f.; Din. 1.18ff., 24ff., 74; Hyp.*Epit.* 17). Athens' case is similar. Its erasure would have deprived the Greeks of an integral element of their shared identity thanks to their role in the Persian Wars, as becomes clear from the Spartan rebuttal (Xen.*Hell.* 2.2.20).

Two general characteristics of memory, whether personal or social, help illuminating the phenomenon at hand even further. First, memories are visual and semantic conceptualizations (Fentress & Wickham 1992, 28-36). The vivid, emotionally charged images of razing a city to a plain field and selling its inhabitants into slavery are conceptualizations easy to remember. These particular actions are specified in the oath to destroy Crisa (Aeschin. 3.108) and reappear in the context of the proposed destruction of Athens (Andoc. 3.21, Isoc. 14.31).

Second, similar experiences reinforce previous memories. According to Siewert 1972, 66ff, the destruction of Crisa by the Amphictyons (Aeschin. 3.108, Isoc. 14.31) constituted the model for the punishment planned for the medizing poleis, especially Thebes (*dekateusai*, Hdt. 7.132.2). The memory of this impending threat was kept alive in Thebes both through the constellation of the Peloponnesian War, since just as at Plataea, Thebes was facing Athens again, and through the experience of city-destructions during this time (e.g. Plataea) and thus stood behind the Theban proposal. city-razings, real (e.g. Melos) and on stage (Eur. *Tr.*, *Hec.*), similarly reinforced Athenian social memory and imagination.