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Polis-toponyms as personal entities (in Thucydides and elsewhere)

By David Whitehead, Belfast

‘His own conversation always took human questions as the topics for investigation: pious and impious, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, self-control and madness, courage and cowardice, *polis* and *politikos*, rule and the ruler in human life. Knowing these and other matters was in his opinion the mark of a gentleman; not knowing them, that of someone justly characterized as a slave’¹.

1. Nowadays the reasons we strive to pursue knowledge or avoid ignorance are unlikely to be expressed in the terms Xenophon ascribes here to Socrates. His questions remain good ones nevertheless, and none more so, at any rate for historians, than the eleventh in the batch: τί πόλις.

In what begins as a list of paired opposites, it is noteworthy that with τί πόλις comes a shift, in the antistrophe chosen, to a different kind of distinction. πολιτικός is not the opposite of πόλις (nor ἀρχικός of ἀρχή). Was no antonym for *polis* available? Perhaps, on the contrary, there were too many. Xenophon himself knew of at least four: *ethnos* (e.g. *Mem.* 1.4.16), *idiotes* (e.g. *Hell.* 6.5.40), *oikos* (e.g. *Mem.* 1.2.64), *philos* (e.g. *Mem.* 1.6.9)². Still, my aim here is not to shed light on this curious passage *per se*. I cite it as a reminder, that asking the question τί πόλις has a long history, and as a warning, that modern scholars who believe they know the answer should ensure it is an answer that does not do violence to the ancient evidence.

2. No-one who reads classical Greek literature and/or inscriptions with the question τί πόλις in mind can fail to notice that the word displays a range of

1 Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.16: αὐτὸς δὲ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀεὶ διελέγετο σκοπῶν, τί εὐσεβές, τί ἀσεβές, τί καλόν, τί αἰσχρόν, τί δίκαιον, τί ἄδικον, τί σωφροσύνη, τί μανία, τί ἀνδρεία, τί δειλία, τί πόλις, τί πολιτικός, τί ἀρχὴ ἀνθρώπων, τί ἀρχικός ἀνθρώπων, καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ἃ τοὺς μὲν εἰδὼτας ἠγεῖτο καλοὺς κάγαυοὺς εἶναι, τοὺς δ’ ἀγνοοῦντας ἀνδραποδώδεις ἂν δικαίως κεκληῖσθαι.

2 Note also (e.g.) *Hell.* 4.4.15, τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὴν ἄκραν (Phleious); 4.7.3, κατὰ τε τοὺς ἀγροὺς καὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει (Argos); 5.4.3, εἰς τὴν χώραν εἰς τὴν πόλιν (Thebes); *Cyn.* 1.17, ἡ πόλει ἢ βασιλεῖ (in heroic age).

“meanings”; in any case this is a fact to which attention is routinely drawn in general terms³. For my purposes it would be supererogatory to rehearse *in extenso* the full extent of denotations and connotations attested. Suffice it to observe that underpinning them all lies an apparently fundamental differentiation which can be variously expressed: city and state, place and people; the topographical or the political; inanimate versus animate. In consecutive chapters of Isocrates XIV, for example, Plataia is a ‘polis’ physically dismantled (§ 7) and a ‘polis’ coerced into dependence upon the Thebans (§ 8).

Thousands of other instances could be amassed, many of them as readily divisible between the bricks-and-mortar and the flesh-and-blood “meanings” as the two just given. Yet sometimes no certainty seems possible. Consider the oft-cited chap. 14 of Aineias the Tactician’s *Poliorketika*⁴. It begins by directing the reader back to advice, given in 10.20ff., on how to handle those ‘in the polis’ (ἐν τῇ πόλει) who are hostile to the *status quo*. What “meaning” of *polis* is intended there?

If one clings to the fact that, across the evidence as a whole, such perplexities arise in only a minority of passages⁵, the methodological way forward might seem clear. Sufficient care and perceptiveness, it could be argued, ought to result in a satisfactory understanding of the overwhelming bulk of contexts; only an insignificant residue would be left in a state of indeterminacy. By the end of this paper I hope to have cast some doubt upon the appropriateness, to this matter, of such an approach – what Momigliano famously called ‘the antiquarian mentality with its fondness for classification’⁶. But first let us identify the specific point on which ancient evidence and modern doctrine have parted company with each other.

3. The doctrine in question dates back at least to the early 1960s, when it was enunciated by Moses Finley as follows: “An ancient Greek could only express the idea of Athens as a political unit by saying ‘the Athenians’; the single word ‘Athens’ never meant anything but a spot on the map, a purely and narrowly geographical notion. One travelled to Athens; one made war against the Athenians”⁷. Two decades later came a fuller and (typographically) even

3 Two recent examples: R. Koerner, ‘Die Bedeutung von πόλις und verwandten Begriffen nach Aussage der Inschriften’, in E. C. Welskopf (ed.), *Untersuchungen ausgewählter altgriechischer sozialer Typenbegriffe (Soziale Typenbegriffe im alten Griechenland und ihr Fortleben in den Sprachen der Welt, vol. III)* (Berlin 1981) 360ff.; M. H. Hansen in *The Ancient Greek City-State* (Symposium on the occasion of the 250th Anniversary of The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, July 1–4 1992) (Copenhagen 1993) 7ff.

4 See generally, D. Whitehead (ed.), *Aineias the Tactician, How to Survive under Siege* (Oxford 1990) 25–33 (esp. 29–30) and 136–138.

5 See further below, § 9.

6 A. Momigliano, *Contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome 1955) 100 (= *Studies in Historiography*, London 1966, 25).

7 M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Greeks* (London 1963) 35.

more emphatic declaration from him: “In ancient Greek such statements as ‘Corinth decided’ or ‘Athens declared war against Sparta’ were *always* formulated as ‘the Corinthians decided’, ‘the Athenians declared war on the Spartans’. Athens, Corinth, Sparta were geographical place-names, not the names of political communities. Because the Athenians held as their territory the whole of the district of Attica, we risk ambiguity by saying ‘Athens did this or that’, ‘Anaxagoras visited Athens’, whereas the Greek practice was specific and clear on this score. More important for our purposes, it was psychologically and politically precise”⁸.

Mogens Herman Hansen, likewise, has several times pressed the same distinction: “Grækerne identificerede primært state med borgerne: stat = folk. Den græske historie handler om athenerne, lakedaimonierne og korinthierne. Det er aldrig Athen og Lakedaimon, der fører krig, altid athenerne og lakedaimonierne”. Thus Hansen in 1978⁹; and subsequent (English) versions have been essentially unchanged¹⁰.

4. Such a view, then, has been repeatedly uttered by Finley and Hansen, echoed by others¹¹, taught to students (*experto credite*), and never, to my knowledge, challenged¹². It is orthodoxy on the subject. And it is a highly influential orthodoxy in two respects.

(a) It appears to offer a conceptual *point d'appui* for tackling the question τί πόλις, by drawing attention to an allegedly clearcut, categorical distinction (“psychologically and politically precise”: Finley) in ancient Greek usage.

(b) The distinction itself, once accepted, has the effect of privileging the state/people/political/animate facets of *polis*-ness. Hence, implicitly at least, statements such as this one from J. K. Davies: “of the two defining criteria of a

8 M. I. Finley in M. I. Finley (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece: a new appraisal* (Oxford 1984) 10.

9 M. H. Hansen, *Det Athenske Demokrati i 4. århundrede f.Kr I: staten, folket, forfatningen* (Copenhagen 1978) 15.

10 M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oxford 1991) 58: “... the Greeks identified the state primarily with its people – a state is a people... in all the sources, from documents and historical accounts to poetry and legend, it is the people who are stressed and not the territory ... It was never Athens and Sparta that went to war but always ‘the Athenians and the Lakedaimonians’.” The same *verbatim* in Hansen *op.cit.* (n. 3 above) 7–8. Thuc. 1.1.1 (evidently τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων) was the supporting example cited in 1978, 5.25.1 (evidently τὴν ξυμμαχίαν τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων) in 1991/1993.

11 Including the present writer – see M. H. Crawford/D. Whitehead, *Archaic and Classical Greece* (Cambridge 1983) 4: “the *polis* was at the centre of a man’s life, consisting above all of the men who composed its citizen body and only secondarily involving a geographical location – the Athenians, the Spartans, and not Athens, Sparta”. The words are Crawford’s, in this instance, but at the time Whitehead was in full agreement. See also S. Hornblower, *Thucydides* (London 1987) 181, who refers to “the undoubted linguistic fact that in political contexts the Greek for Athens is, as everyone who learns to write a Greek prose is taught, not *Athenai* but *hoi Athenaioi*”.

12 It fell outside the brief of W. Gawantka, *Die sogenannte Polis* (Stuttgart 1985).

[Greek] city-state, geographical unity and kinship structure, the second mattered more”¹³.

As it happens, I believe that Davies and others who share his view¹⁴ are right to hold it. Whether the various senses of ‘*polis*’ are judged by an evolutionary yardstick¹⁵ or by their impact on classical usage, one is indeed apt to conclude that personnel ‘mattered more’ than position. However, to say that topographical connotations are (or become) subsidiary cannot justify marginalizing them to the point of elimination from the picture altogether. From one standpoint the danger of this happening can be prevented by keeping in mind the frequency of passages like Isocrates 14.7 (§ 2, above), where ‘*polis*’ does, without doubt, signify Finley’s dismissive ‘spot on the map’. But it is also time to challenge the assertion that polis-toponyms – with or without the addition of the word *polis* itself – were conceptually unable to function as personal entities.

5. An initial sample of passages will establish the basic point that there really is, here, an issue for discussion:

(A) Documentary sources (treaties)

(a) IG I³ 40.55–56: ‘the others shall pay to Chalkis’ (τὸς δὲ ἄλλος τελεῖν ἐς Χαλκίδα). (b) “Peace of Nicias” *ap.* Thuc. 5.18.5: ‘they are Argilos, Stagiros, Akanthos, Skolos, Olynthos, Spartolos; and they shall be allies of neither side, neither Lakedaimonian nor Athenian’ (εἰσὶ δὲ Ἄργιλος, Στάγιρος, Ἄκανθος, Σκῶλος, Ὀλωνθός, Σπάρτωλος. ξυμμάχους δ’ εἶναι μηδετέρων, μήτε Λακεδαιμονίων μήτε Ἀθηναίων). (c) “King’s Peace” *ap.* Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.31: ‘the other Hellenic *poleis*, small and large shall be autonomous except Lemnos and Imbros and Skyros’ (τὰς δὲ ἄλλας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις καὶ μικρὰς καὶ μεγάλας αὐτονόμους ἀφεῖναι πλὴν Λήμνου καὶ Ἴμβρου καὶ Σκύρου).

(B.1) Literary sources: historians¹⁶

(d) Hdt. 5.103.2: ‘even Kaunos, previously unwilling to join the alliance, joined now’ (καὶ γὰρ τὴν Καῦνον πρότερον οὐ βουλομένην συμμαχεῖν, ... τότε σφι καὶ αὕτη προσεγένετο). (e) Hdt. 7.151: ‘he reckoned no *polis* friendlier than Argos’ (οὐδεμίαν νομίζειν πόλιν Ἄργεος φιλιωτέραν). (f) Hdt. 8.112.2:

13 J. K. Davies, *Democracy and Classical Greece* (Hassocks [Sussex] 1978) 26. See also n. 11 above.

14 They include of course, besides ancient historians, political scientists for whom facts (or beliefs) about the Greek polis form part of a larger critique. See e.g. the quotation from p. 198 of Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (Chicago 1958) which opens Oswyn Murray’s article ‘Cities of Reason’ (*European Journal of Sociology* 28, 1987, 325–346; reprinted, modified, in O. Murray/S. Price [eds.], *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander*, Oxford 1990, 1–25): “The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together ...”.

15 As by Hansen (n. 3 above) 9ff.

16 Thucydides is treated separately below (§§ 6–7).

‘Andros was under siege because it had medized’ (τὴν τε Ἄνδρον ὡς πολιορκέοιτο διότι ἐμήδισε). (g) Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.12: ‘he sailed against Methymna, in Lesbos, which was hostile’ (ἔπλευσε τῆς Λέσβου ἐπὶ Μήθυμναν πολεμίαν οὖσαν). (h) Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.6: ‘he took over *poleis*: Pergamon willingly, and Teuthrania and Halisarna’ (πόλεις Πέργαμον μὲν ἐκοῦσαν προσέλαβε καὶ Τευθρανίαν καὶ Ἀλίσαρναν). (i) Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.36: ‘they had gained in Corinth an additional ally’ (προσέλαβον μὲν σύμμαχον Κόρινθον). (j) Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.24: ‘he took over Poteidaia willingly, despite its being already their ally’ (Ποτειδαίαν δὲ καὶ προσέλαβεν ἐκοῦσαν, σύμμαχον ἤδη ἐκείνων οὖσαν). (k) Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.32: ‘Sparta needs such soldiers’ (τὴν γὰρ Σπάρτην τοιούτων δεῖσθαι στρατιωτῶν). (l) Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.8: ‘if I were joined by Pharsalos and the *poleis* dependent on you’ (Φαρσάλου προσγενομένης καὶ τῶν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἠρτημένων πόλεων).

(B.2) Literary sources: oratory

(m) Isoc. 4.161: ‘Cyprus revolted’ (Κύπρος ἀφέστηκε)¹⁷. (n) Isoc. 15.109: ‘he captured Korkyra, a *polis* possessed of eighty triremes’ (Κόρκυραν εἴλε, πόλιν ὀγδοήκοντα τριήρεις κεκτημένην). (o) Demosth. 20.61: ‘Thasos and Byzantion then had close relations with the Lakedaimonians and were estranged from you’ (ἡ Θάσος ἦν τότε καὶ τὸ Βυζάντιον Λακεδαιμονίοις μὲν οἰκεῖα, ὑμῖν δ’ ἀλλότρια). (p) Demosth. 18.234: ‘for neither Chios nor Rhodes nor Kerkyra was on our side’ (οὔτε γὰρ Χίος οὔτε Ῥόδος οὔτε Κέρκυρα μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἦν). (q) Demosth. 18.302: ‘to make kinsmen and allies of Byzantion, Abydos, Euboeia’ (ὅπως οἰκεῖα καὶ σύμμαχ’ ὑπάρξει πρᾶξαι τὸ Βυζάντιον, τὴν Ἄβυδον, τὴν Εὐβοίαν). (r) Aesch. 3.125: ‘in accordance with his retainer from Amphisssa’ (ὑπὲρ τοῦ μεσεγγυήματος τοῦ ἐξ Ἀμφίσσης).

(B.3) Literary sources: political analysis

(s) Aristot. *Pol.* 1316a30: ‘like Sikyon’s’ (ὥσπερ ἡ Σικυῶνος (*sc.* πολιτεία)).

Taken individually, some of these passages make a weaker impact than others. Cyprus (m) and Euboeia (q) were not individual *poleis* but agglomerations of *poleis*. Kaunos (d) was a Karian *polis* ([Skylax] 99), not a Greek one. Again, was it not natural to write of besieging ‘Andros’ (f) rather than the Andrians? (Actually the answer to that rhetorical question is inconclusive: people, in Herodotus, can be besieged as well as places¹⁸. Besides, in f διότι ἐμήδισε would remain striking.) Arguing away one passage or another, though, is scarcely the point. What is common to them all – and to others yet to be cited – is that the substance of what is being described would have made the eth-

¹⁷ For revolt by toponyms see below, § 7.

¹⁸ Witness e.g. Amathous/Amathousioi (5.104.3, 105.1, 108.1, 114.1), Paros/Parioi (6.133.2, 135.1) and Thebes/Thebaioi (9.86.2, 87.1–2). See also (e.g.) 1.154, 1.164.1, 3.151.1, 5.64.2, 5.72.2, 6.99.2, 7.154.2.

nikon of the *polis* concerned more appropriate than its toponym. According to the modern orthodoxy no ‘spot on the map’ could enter into an alliance (*b, d, i, j, l, p, q*), fraternize with Persians (*f*), stage a revolt (*m*), possess a constitution (*s*) or a war-fleet (*n*), pay (*r*) or receive (*a*) money, enjoy autonomy (*c*), or whatever. But according to the ancient evidence, ancient as well as modern usage found it perfectly acceptable to use *polis*-toponyms when describing that *polis*’s actions or reactions.

6. As § 5 has indicated, one can gather this evidence from a variety of prose authors, not to mention documentary sources (transmitted directly or indirectly); and gathering it entails, in most instances, discarding numerous passages which do illustrate the orthodox modern view about *polis*-toponyms. However, there is one major writer whose counter-testimony is both quantitatively and qualitatively in a class of its own.

Thucydidean usage offers numerous instances of the kinds we have seen exemplified in other sources. Once again, *polis*-toponyms variously act and/or react as personal entities:

(A) Stasis (etc.)

1.18.1: ‘although Lakedaimon has been in a state of *stasis* for most of its known history, it nevertheless enjoyed good laws from very early on and was always free from tyranny’ (ἡ γὰρ Λακεδαίμων ... ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὧν ἴσμεν χρόνον στασιάσασα ὁμως ἐκ παλαιτάτου καὶ ἡννομήθη καὶ αἰεὶ ἀτυράννευτος ἦν). (cf. 3.69.2, τὴν Κέρκυραν ... στασιάζουσαν; 4.1.3, τὸ γὰρ Ῥήγιον ... ἐστασίαζε; 7.46, Ἀκράγαντα στασιάζοντα.) 3.70.3: ‘enslaving Kerkyra to the Athenians’ (Ἀθηναῖοις τὴν Κέρκυραν καταδουλοῦν).

(B) Political/military allegiance

1.25.1: ‘no help was coming to them from Kerkyra’ (οὐδεμίαν σφίσις ἀπὸ Κερκύρας τιμωρίαν οὐσαν)¹⁹. 1.44.2: ‘they were unwilling to see Kerkyra, the possessor of so large a fleet, go over to the Corinthians’ (τὴν Κέρκυραν ἐβούλοντο μὴ προέσθαι τοῖς Κορινθίοις ναυτικὸν ἔχουσαν τοσοῦτον). 2.2.3: ‘they wanted to seize Plataia, always at odds with them, first’ (ἐβούλοντο τὴν Πλαταίαν αἰεὶ σφίσις διάφορον οὐσαν ... προκαταλαβεῖν). 2.100.3: ‘Gortynia and Atalante and some other places which were on their side by agreement’ (Γορτυνίαν δὲ καὶ Ἀταλάντην καὶ ἄλλα ἄττα χώρια ὁμολογία ... προσχωροῦντα). (Cf. 4.69.1, τὰ Μέγαρα προσχωρήσαι; 4.107.3, Μύρκινός τε αὐτῶ προσεχώρησεν; 8.23.6, Κλαζομεναὶ προσεχώρησαν Ἀθηναίοις; 8.25.5, νομίζοντες, εἰ προσαγάγοιντο Μίλητον, ραδίως ἂν σφίσις καὶ τᾶλλα προσχωρήσαι; 8.44.2, καὶ προσεχώρησε Ῥόδος Πελοποννησίους.) 3.86.2: ‘the allies ... of Leontinoi were the Chalkidian *poleis* and Kamarina’ (ξύμμαχοι ... τοῖς δὲ Λεοντινοῖς αἱ Χαλ-

¹⁹ Here ἀπὸ Κερκύρας effectively means παρὰ Κερκυραίων *vel sim*.

κιδικαὶ πόλεις καὶ Καμάρινα). 5.36.1: ‘they knew that the Lakedaimonians were always eager for Argos to have an honourable friendship with them’ (τὸ γὰρ Ἄργος αἰεὶ ἠπίσταντο ἐπιθυμοῦντας τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους καλῶς σφίσι φίλιον γενέσθαι). (Cf. 5.41.3, ἐπεθύμουν γὰρ τὸ Ἄργος πάντως φίλιον ἔχειν.) 6.20.3: ‘Naxos and Katane, which I hope will join us’ (Νάξου καὶ Κατάνης, ἃς ἐλπίζω ἡμῖν ... προσέσεσθαι). (Cf. 7.14.2, αἱ γὰρ νῦν οὖσαι πόλεις ζύμμαχοι ἀδύνατοι Νάξος καὶ Κατάνη.) 8.73.4: ‘they were reluctant to see ... Samos made an enemy of the Athenians’ (οὐκ ἠξίουσαν περιδεῖν ... Σάμον Ἀθηναίοις ἀλλοτριωθεῖσαν).

(C) Initiates war

3.5.1: ‘the Mytilenians and the rest of Lesbos, except Methymna, went to war’ (ἐς πόλεμον καθίσταντο οἱ Μυτιληναῖοι καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Λέσβος πλην Μηθύμνης).

(D) Suffers war (etc.)

1.55.2: ‘thus Kerkyra survived the war with the Corinthians’ (ἡ μὲν οὖν Κέρκυρα οὕτω περιγίγνεται τῷ πολέμῳ τῶν Κορινθίων). 3.3.1: ‘they thought it a serious matter to wage war on Lesbos too, which had a fleet and undiminished strength’ (μέγα μὲν ἔργον ἡγοῦντο εἶναι Λέσβον προσπολεμώσασθαι ναυτικὸν ἔχουσαν καὶ δύναμιν ἀκέραιον). (Cf. 3.4.3, Λέσβῳ πάση πολεμεῖν.) 4.104.5: ‘he wanted above all to reach Amphipolis before it surrendered’ (ἐβούλετο φθάσαι μάλιστα μὲν οὖν τὴν Ἀμφίπολιν, πρὶν τι ἐνδοῦναι). 4.109.5: ‘Sane and Dion held out’ (Σάνη δὲ καὶ Δῖον ἀντέστη).

(E) Possesses a fleet

1.44.2: see above, under B. 3.3.1: see above, under D.

(F) Miscellaneous

5.28.2: ‘Lakedaimon was naturally the object of much abuse and contempt for these setbacks’ (ἢ τε Λακεδαίμων μάλιστα δὴ κακῶς ἤκουσε καὶ ὑπερώφθη διὰ τὰς ξυμφοράς).

7. From even such a partial sorting as this, some patterns emerge. Certain conditions in or activities of a *polis* – more precisely, certain verbs which describe those conditions or activities – seem to have prompted Thucydides to use that *polis*'s toponym instead of (or sometimes as well as) its ethnicon. One such verb is *προσχωρεῖν*, another *στασιάζειν*. However, the most reliable “trigger” by far was *ἀφιστάναι*. Again and again, when *poleis* in Thucydides either (A) revolt (intransitive; *polis* the subject) or (B) are induced to revolt (transitive; *polis* the object), they do so as toponyms:

(A) 1.60.3, ‘Poteidaia revolted’ – Ποτειδαία ἀπέστη (cf. 1.57.4, τῆς Ποτειδαίας ἔνεκα ἀποστάσεως; 1.59.1, τὴν τε Ποτειδαίαν καὶ τᾶλλα ἀφεστηκότα; 1.60.1, τῆς Ποτειδαίας ἀφεστηκυίας); 1.114.1, ‘Euboia revolted from the Athenians, and ... it was announced to (Perikles) that Megara had revolted’ – Εὐβοία ἀπέστη ἀπὸ Ἀθηναίων, καὶ ... ἠγγέλθη αὐτῷ ὅτι Μέγαρα ἀφέστηκε; 3.2.1, ‘Lesbos, except Methymna, revolted from the Athenians’ – Λέσβος πλὴν Μηθύμνης ἀπέστη ἀπ’ Ἀθηναίων; 4.88.2, ‘Stagiros ... joined the revolt’ – Στάγιρος ... ξυναπέστη; 4.120.1, ‘Skione ... revolted from the Athenians’ – Σκιώνη ... ἀπέστη ἀπ’ Ἀθηναίων; 4.123.1, ‘Mende revolted from them’ – Μένδη ἀφίσταται αὐτῶν; 5.64.1, ‘Tegea would revolt from them ... and was indeed on the brink of doing so’ – ἀποστήσεται αὐτῶν Τεγέα ... καὶ ὅσον οὐκ ἀφέστηκεν; 8.62.1, ‘Abydos ... revolted ..., and Lampsakos’ - Ἄβυδος ... ἀφίσταται ..., καὶ Λάμψακος (cf. 8.61.1, under B); 8.100.3, ‘Eresos ... had revolted’ – Ἐρεσος ... ἀφειστήκει (cf. 8.23.4 and, again, 8.100.3, under B).

(B)²⁰ 8.14.3, ‘they sailed ... to Klazomenai and made it revolt’ – πλεύσαντες καὶ Κλαζομενάς ἀφιστᾶσιν; 8.17.1, ‘they sailed to Miletos to make it revolt’ – ἔπλεον ἐς Μίλητον ὡς ἀποστήσοντες (cf. 8.17.3, ἀφιστᾶσι τὴν Μίλητον); 8.19.4, ‘they made Lebedos revolt and then Hairai’ – Λέβεδον ἀπέστησαν καὶ αὐτὶς Αἰράς; 8.22.2, ‘the ships sailed first to Methymna and made it revolt, and ... the rest made Mytilene revolt’ – καὶ αἱ μὲν νῆες καταπλεύσασαι Μήθυμναν πρῶτον ἀφιστᾶσι, καὶ ... αἱ λοιπαὶ Μυτιλήνην ἀφιστᾶσιν; 8.23.4, ‘he made Eresos revolt and armed it’ – τὴν Ἐρεσον ἀποστήσας καὶ ὀπλίσας; 8.32.3, ‘they ought to ... make Lesbos revolt’ – ὡς χρὴ ... ἀποστήσαι τὴν Λέσβον; 8.61.1, ‘he was sent out ... to make Abydos revolt’ – παρεπέμφθη ... Ἄβυδον ἀποστήσων; 8.64.4, ‘to have a fleet despatched and make Thasos revolt’ – ναῦς τε κομίσαι καὶ τὴν Θάσον ἀποστήσαι; 8.80.2, ‘a message had reached them that (someone) would make Byzantium revolt’ – τὸ Βυζάντιον ἐπεκηρυκεύετο αὐτοῖς ἀποστήναι (cf. 8.80.3, αἱ ... δέκα (sc. νῆες) ... Βυζάντιον ἀφιστᾶσιν); 8.95.7, ‘they made the whole of Euboia revolt, except Oreos’ – Εὐβοίαν [τε] ἅπασαν ἀποστήσαντες πλὴν Ὀρεοῦ (cf. 8.60.1, ἐπιβουλεύοντες ἀπόστασιν τῆς Εὐβοίας); 8.100.3, ‘they made Eresos revolt’ – ἀφιστᾶσι τὴν Ἐρεσον.

8. ‘It is the common experience of people who study Thucydides intensively over a long period that one goes on indefinitely noticing things in him which one has not noticed before ... [T]here always seems to remain the possibility that something really important is still waiting to be noticed’²¹. If the phenomenon documented in §§ 6 and, particularly, 7 has, in point of fact, been

20 It will be seen that all the examples I could find of the transitive use of ἀφιστάναι (someone, stated or unstated, making a polis-toponym revolt) come from Book 8; but what, if anything, that is telling us is extraordinarily difficult to say!

21 K. J. Dover, *Thucydides (Greece & Rome, New Surveys in the Classics no. 7, Oxford 1973) 44.*

‘noticed’ before, it is puzzling how could we have been told, and continued to believe, that *poleis* ‘always’ impinged on the world as *ethnika* and ‘never’ as toponyms.

Be that as it may, the truth is, now, out, and its significance must be assessed. Let us consider first this matter of revolts. Is Thucydides perhaps revealing something particular – as he, at any rate, perceived it – about the nature of the Athenian Empire? Were the Athenians’ allies so contemptible that they did not deserve the same terminological courtesies as the hegemonic *polis* itself? In formal terms 5.64.1 (cited above, § 7A) would disprove any such thesis: the αὐτῶν in question, likely to lose their ally ‘Tegea’ to the Argives & co., are of course the Spartans. One would therefore have to reformulate the point and suggest that, for Thucydides, the allies of either (or any) great hegemonic *polis* did not always attain the dignity of being described as people rather than places. But that would be a very large inference to draw from his language alone, without substantive evidence in support.

Equally far-fetched would be conclusions about the nature of fifth-century revolts themselves – or some of them. A generation ago, lavish attention was devoted to the incidence of revolt in (or from) the Athenian Empire particularly, with strenuous debate surrounding the question of whether they were the work of whole citizen-communities or disenfranchised minorities therein²². When Thucydides tells us that (e.g.) the ‘Naxians’ or the ‘Thasians’ revolted (1.98.4, 1.100.2) he notoriously obscures, by accident or design, such distinctions. The question might then become whether a revolt by, say, ‘Mende’ (4.123.1) is to be understood as something substantively different from what a revolt by ‘the Mendaians’ would have been; an act not confined to the *politai* but embracing (like Athens’ metics in the 403 *kathodos*) its population rather than just its citizen-body. But here again, that kind of analysis looks over-subtle, when a far simpler explanation – pure phraseological variation – lies to hand²³.

I am suggesting, then, that it is pointless to seek an external, case-determined explanation for the appearance of toponyms rather than *ethnika* in the sort of passages presented above. We might as well ask why Russell Meiggs, in his discussion of Thuc. 1.100.2–101.3, slipped in one ‘the Thasians’ as a variant on his otherwise preferred ‘Thasos’²⁴. Given (a) that revolt-vocabulary is but one aspect of Thucydides’ employment of *polis*-toponyms as personal entities and (b) that that usage is anyway found elsewhere, what should be regarded as significant is not so much any particular passage or cluster of passages but the phenomenon as a whole.

22 A full bibliography would be otiose; I confine myself to citing G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London 1972) 34ff, esp. n. 64.

23 In the Mende instance the toponym immediately becomes αὐτούς, and that in turn is soon glossed as οἱ Μενδαῖοι. See generally J. G. A. Ros, *Die μεταβολή (variatio) als Stilprinzip des Thukydides* (Nijmegen 1938) 210–214 (with this example at 212).

24 R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford 1972) 83–85; *ethnikon* at 84.

9. Understanding the phenomenon's significance entails setting it in context. Two main points seem to arise:

(A) The *norms* of ancient and modern usage are, undeniably, different. We can remind ourselves of this by leafing through the pages of *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums*. Time after time the modern editor's lemma reads 'Bündnis zwischen Athen und Hermione' (no. 150) or whatever, while the document itself has [χ]συνῦξκαὶ Ἑρμιονέον καὶ Ἀθηναίο[ν]. Yet enough evidence has been presented here to disprove, in a formal sense, any categorical distinction between (as Finley had it) *polis*-toponyms as mere 'geographical place-names' and *polis*-ethnika as 'political communities'.

I therefore suggest that in future we do speak of differing *norms* in this area. Alternatively, if preferred, the term used could be *generalizations* – of the (Finleyesque) type which contrary cases qualify without overturning²⁵. What must be abandoned is the always/never talk, implying distinctions so absolute that they mark an unbridgeable conceptual gulf.

(B) Recognizing that no such gulf exists should occasion us less surprise than if it did. That Herodotus (for example), when describing *poleis* under siege, can switch back and forth between toponyms and ethnika has already been noted²⁶. His reporting of episodes of *andrapodismos*, likewise, sometimes has it inflicted upon a toponym (e.g. 6.17, Phokaia), sometimes upon an ethnikon (e.g. 6.96, Naxians). Medism in Herodotus is predicated of 'Thespeia and Plataia' (8.50.2) and 'Andros' (8.112.2; quoted above, § 5f) as well as of (the) 'Athenians' (9.8.2) or 'the Thebans' (9.15.2). He can record, within the same sentence, the capture of (the) 'Byzantians' and 'Kalchedonians' on the one hand, of 'Antandros', 'Lamponion', 'Lemnos' and 'Imbros' on the other (5.26). In short, any and every usage appears to have been legitimate for him, and this can be corroborated by the following schema. Herodotean example of:

- (a1) '*polis*' alone as place: 1.141.4; (a2) '*polis*'+ ethnikon as place: 8.50.2;
- (a3) ethnikon alone as (effectively) place: 7.22.2; (a4) toponym alone as place: 8.137.1; (a5) '*polis*'+ toponym as place: 5.117,
- (b1) '*polis*' alone as people: 4.15.1; (b2) '*polis*'+ ethnikon as people: 5.92β.1;
- (b3) ethnikon alone as people: 6.108.4; (b4) toponym alone as people: 8.112.2;
- (b5) '*polis*'+ toponym as people: 7.151.

While such a schema has its own point to make, however, it might ultimately prove misleading for the reason touched on earlier (§ 2). The logical mind loves classification, and ancient *polis*-usage appears to offer ample scope for it.

25 Cf. Finley in P. E. Easterling/J. V. Muir (eds.), *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge 1985) xiv: "exceptions are known to every point that follows, but they do not invalidate the generalizations".

26 Above, n. 18.

Some passages “mean” the city, we say, others the state. Thus, when confronted with a phrase such as ‘many terrible things were happening throughout the *polis*’ (πολλῶν δὲ καὶ δεινῶν κατὰ τὴν πόλιν γιγνομένων: Lycurg. *Leoc.* 41) we strive to interpret it in one way or the other before admitting defeat. But perhaps the approach itself is at fault, not the efficacy of its application. Better to focus on and emphasize – not marginalize or discount – instances of Protean semantic shift like the one in Thucydides 2.2.1: ‘they entered Plataia in Boiotia, an ally of the Athenians’ (ἔσῃλθον ... ἐς Πλάταιαν τῆς Βοιωτίας οὔσαν Ἀθηναίων ξυμμαχίδα). And better still to learn from, rather than despair over, a case like Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.9, ‘Lysandros arrived in Aigina and gave the *polis* back to the Aiginetans’ (Λύσανδρος δὲ ἀφικόμενος εἰς Αἴγινα ἀπέδωκε τὴν πόλιν Αἰγινήταις), where there is not even a shift but an indivisible whole²⁷.

27 This paper has benefited from suggestions by Dr Antony Keen and Professor Margarethe Billerbeck, to both of whom I tender my thanks and the usual exemption from complicity in the overall argument.