

# The Ancient History Bulletin

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## **Edited by:**

Edward Anson ✦ Michael Fronda ✦ David Hollander

Timothy Howe ✦ John Vanderspoel

Pat Wheatley ✦ Sabine Müller ✦ Alex McAuley

Catalina Balmaceda ✦ Charlotte Dunn



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# The Aftermath of Aigospotamoi and the Decline of Spartan Naval Power\*

John O. Hyland

**Abstract:** *Sparta's naval victory in the Peloponnesian War depended on ship contributions from Peloponnesian and central Greek allies and funding from the Persian empire. At the end of the war, Lysander's acquisition of captured enemy triremes allowed Sparta to break free from its reliance on allied warships, but not without long-term consequences. In the Persian War of the following decade, although Sparta was now able to launch a fleet without Corinthian or Theban participation, it lacked resources to maintain its aging ships' seaworthiness, and its loss of Persian financial support doomed its efforts to recruit and pay adequate naval crews. The logistical and financial consequences of the breakdown of Sparta's Peloponnesian War alliances brought about the collapse of its short-lived naval dominance.*

**Keywords:** *Sparta, Lysander, Peloponnesian War, Spartan-Persian War, trireme, coalition diplomacy*

At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Sparta appeared to be on the verge of establishing a new Aegean naval hegemony in the place of the fallen Athenian empire. Sustained by financial aid from Achaemenid Persia, a fleet of Spartan and allied Peloponnesian warships brought an end to the power of Athens by capturing the bulk of its warships at the Battle of Aigospotamoi. In the wake of this victory, the Spartan admiral Lysander inaugurated the final siege of Athens with a force of 200 triremes, unrivaled by any other state in the eastern Mediterranean world. But only ten years later, embroiled in a new conflict with the Persians, Sparta was unable to muster more than 85 triremes at the decisive Battle of Knidos, where its erstwhile patrons cut short its love affair with the sea.

The dramatic decline of Sparta's naval power between 405 and 394 was a turning point in Greek history, which cut short the possibility of a Spartan empire encompassing both sides of the Aegean. Previous studies have touched on insufficient ship numbers and strategic over-extension as contributing factors in Spartan defeat, but have given the greatest attention to the issue of command and the incompetence of the navarchs who succeeded Lysander—above all the inexperienced Peisandros, King Agesilaos' brother-in-law, whose nepotistic appointment preceded the Knidos disaster.<sup>1</sup> But while inadequate leadership may have played a role, it is also clear that Sparta was struggling to launch and man a fleet on the scale required

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\* I am grateful to AHB's anonymous referees for valuable comments on several points discussed below.

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton 1979, 219-20, 228; Cartledge 1987, 217-18; Falkner 1992, 242-47, 275; Buckler 2003, 43-44; Fornis 2009, 205; Naiden 2009, 743; Strauss 2009, 34, 48-52.

for the naval challenges that it faced in 394. There was a limit to what even a talented commander could achieve without sea-worthy ships and well-paid crews, and a deeper understanding of the causes of Sparta's naval crisis requires further attention to its diplomatic, logistical, and financial contexts, including the collapse of its Peloponnesian and Boiotian alliances and the challenges posed by the loss of Persian funding.<sup>2</sup>

This study will begin by reviewing the contributions of Sparta's naval allies to the outcome of the Peloponnesian War, and will examine neglected evidence for attempts to increase the size of the Spartan (as opposed to the Peloponnesian) fleet at the end of the war. It will then survey the apparent decline in ship numbers and quality by the time of the escalating naval operations in 395-394, considering the implications of Sparta's loss of Corinthian and Theban allies. Finally it will explore the problems of trireme maintenance, manpower, and naval finance that the Spartan fleet faced at this period, examining the connections between shortfalls in all these areas and the failures of Sparta's post-war diplomacy.

### **Spartan Triremes and Coalition Fleets at the End of the Peloponnesian War**

In recent years, several studies have rejected simplistic stereotypes of Spartan incompetence at naval warfare, recognizing Sparta's capacity for naval adaptation as a factor in the outcome of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the Lakedaimonian polis did not acquire a large number of triremes in its own right until the war's end, and Spartan navarchs traditionally commanded fleets of Peloponnesian allies in which actual Spartan-owned ships remained a distinct minority.<sup>4</sup> In the ship-building surge at the outset of the Peloponnesian War's final Ionian phase, Sparta undertook the construction of only 25 triremes while expecting its allies in the Peloponnese and central Greece to build 75 more (Thuc. 8.3.2). After the coalition fleet's destruction at Kyzikos in 410, Sparta engaged in additional ship-building—Alkibiades observed a group of 30 triremes underway at Gytheion in 408 or 407 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.11), and on another occasion, the Spartans filled 25 of their own hulls with crews recruited from the Peloponnesian allies (Diod. 13.65.3), possibly indicating that their timber resources exceeded their willingness to allocate local manpower for naval purposes. But the percentage of Spartan ships in allied fleets remained small. At the Battle of Arginousai in 406, only ten of the Peloponnesian ships are identified as Lakedaimonian, and nine of these were lost (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.34).

This pattern continued under Lysander's renewed command in 405, which seems to have numbered between 150 and 200 ships overall, despite Xenophon's and Diodorus' reticence on its exact size and composition.<sup>5</sup> Either 93 or 101 ships had survived Arginousai, including 30

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<sup>2</sup> Falkner 1992, 228 n. 20, 269-270, addresses but undervalues the significance of the allied contingents' loss.

<sup>3</sup> See Falkner 1992; Cartledge 2009, 52-53; Naiden 2009; Strauss 2009, 34; Millender 2015. But see Ruzé 2015, 540-44, for a more critical appraisal of Spartan naval performance in the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>4</sup> Falkner 1992, 138-41; Bertosa 2005, 7-8; Cartledge 2009, 53; Strauss 2009, 45; Ruzé 2015, 552. For the limitations this could impose on operations far from the Peloponnese, see Roisman 1987, 393. On the institution of the navy in Sparta, see Sealey 1976; Christien 2015; Thommen 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars are divided between the low and high estimates for Lysander's fleet. For the high estimate, dependent on references to a fleet of 200 after the battle (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.5, 7), see Beloch 1914, 424 n. 1; Hamilton

Athenian triremes captured off Lesbos and requiring new crews.<sup>6</sup> Lysander augmented this force with a reinforcement of 35 triremes, provided by unspecified Peloponnesians (Diod. 13.104.3); it is unclear whether he recruited additional allies on his initial cruise from Ephesos to Rhodes (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.16). He also ordered shipwrights at Antandros to construct several new triremes (*Hell.* 2.1.10), which may have reverted to Spartan ownership upon completion.<sup>7</sup> But there is no other evidence for a significant contingent of actual Spartan warships during the Aigospotamoi campaign.

This impression is confirmed by Lysander's Delphic monument honoring the Spartan generals and allied commanders, which provides the closest thing to a roster of the Peloponnesian fleet that won the war.<sup>8</sup> Its inscription (ML 95), together with a summary by Pausanias (10.9.7-10), indicates participation by at least twenty allied communities, emphasizing the collaborative nature of the victory. The contributors included Corinth, Sparta's preeminent naval supporter from the outset of the war; the Corinthian allies in Ambrakia and Leukas; Pellene; Sikyon; the Aktaian cities of Troizen, Epidauros, and Hermione; Megara; Boiotia; Phokis; the Euboian poleis of Eretria and Karystos; and the islands of Chios and Rhodes. Based on their participation in earlier fleets, Corinth, Boiotia, Chios, and Rhodes are likely to have been the largest individual contributors, each of which should have been able to provide at least as many, if not more ships than the Spartans themselves.<sup>9</sup> Additional contingents included a group of at least five Ionian poleis (Erythrai, Ephesos, Samian Anaia, Miletos, and Knidos), which belonged to the Achaemenid empire by the terms of the Spartan-

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1979, 39, 45 n. 83; Bommelaer 1981, 97 n. 77; Lazenby 2004, 238, 245. For a lower total, rooted in the difficulties of rebuilding the fleet after Arginousai and the possibility that the 200 included some of the Athenian ships taken at Aigospotamoi, see Busolt 1904, 1619 n. 1; Rahe 1977, 126; Kagan 1987, 382; Robinson 2014, 1 n. 1; Hyland 2018, 115-116, 202 n. 109.

<sup>6</sup> The evidence consists of the discrepancy in ship numbers in Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.16 and 26; for further discussion see Lazenby 2004, 227; Hamel 2015, 19; Hyland 2018, 113, 201 n. 93.

<sup>7</sup> It is unclear whether these would have been built quickly enough to be ready for Aigospotamoi, although they should have been ready by the time of the Samos siege in the following summer (see Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.25, 1.2.8, and 1.2.12, indicating the complete construction of at least 22 triremes at Antandros in the year between the battles at Kyzikos and Ephesos). The earlier Antandros construction sponsored by Pharnabazos replaced allied triremes destroyed at Kyzikos, but it is unclear whether Lysander's Antandros ships were meant to match the exact number lost at Arginousai.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Falkner 1992, 214; Lazenby 2004, 254-55.

<sup>9</sup> Corinth probably owned at least 50 triremes in 412, including new ships constructed for the Ionian war as well as those that it had committed to the defense of Syracuse; see Salmon 1984, 338. It lost five at Kynossema (Thuc. 8.106.3); but additional losses at Kyzikos would have been replaced in the Antandros building program (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.25), and its admiral Timolaos captured five off the Thracian coast at some point in the Ionian War (*Hell. Oxy.* 10.4). At Arginousai, the Peloponnesian fleet lost 50 to 55% of the 140 ships with which it started the campaign (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.3, 34; Diod. 13.97.3, 13.100.3); if this ratio applied to Corinth's squadron, it should have still possessed 20-25 ships by the time of Aigospotamoi, where two Corinthian *strategoí* are attested in the Delphic inscription. This percentage of the fleet was low compared with Corinth's contributions in the early years of the war, but still substantial relative to other individual contingents. Thebes and the Boiotian League promised to build 25 ships in 412, and despite combat losses in 411, were present in sufficient numbers to form the left wing at Arginousai (Diod. 13.98.4, 99.6). Chios claimed to own 60 triremes at the outset of the Ionian War (Thuc. 8.3.2, 8.6.4; cf. Hornblower 2008, 798-99); together with Rhodes and other unnamed allies, it contributed 50 ships for the Arginousai campaign, more than a third of the fleet (Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.3); and the Delphic inscription shows that Chios and Rhodes sent five *stratēgoi* to Aigospotamoi.



Persian alliance, but which also identified with a coalition of former Athenian subjects that cooperated with Sparta and minted a common coinage in support of Lysander's war effort.<sup>10</sup> This Ionian bloc may have provided about 25 triremes, the number that Cyrus assembled three years later at Ephesos.<sup>11</sup> Little room remains for a sizable Spartan squadron, beyond the personal vessels of Lysander and the five or six other Spartiates attested in the campaign.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to reconstruct a fleet in which the Spartan triremes made up more than ten to fifteen percent of the total number. The ship numbers indicate the essential value of Sparta's naval allies, which supplied enough triremes for the Peloponnesian fleet to engage the Athenians on relatively even terms, provided that the Persians bestowed the decisive financial support necessary to maintain full-strength, well-motivated crews.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of victory, though, there are hints that Lysander altered the balance of the naval alliance by concentrating the bulk of the captive Athenian fleet in exclusively Spartan hands. There was already precedent for the integration of captured triremes into the fleet with the Athenian ships taken off Lesbos during the Arginousai campaign.<sup>14</sup> Aigospotamoi presented Lysander with an unparalleled opportunity for fleet expansion through the intact capture of Athenian triremes, most of which—perhaps as many as 170—were taken on the beach and therefore without significant battle damage.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of the battle, Lysander towed the captured hulls across the strait to Lampsakos (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.30; Plut. *Lys.* 11.6); he may have confiscated some of their sails to replace those of his own ships, which had been stolen by the Athenian fugitive Konon (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.29), in order to facilitate the Spartan voyage to secure the Bosphorus (2.2.1). Upon returning to Lampsakos, Lysander paused to reequip the fleet (2.2.2) in preparation for the siege of Athens; this marks the probable context for a final decision on the fate of the enemy ships. Caroline Falkner's study on Spartan naval power argued that Lysander destroyed them, citing his transportation of "rams from the captured ships" (*ta te tōn aichmalōtōn neōn akrōtēria*) to Sparta

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<sup>10</sup> For the "Alliance" (SYN-) coinage and its association with Lysander's final Peloponnesian War campaigns, see Karwiese 1980; Meadows 2011, 287-92; Ellis-Evans 2016, 10-11, 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> See Hyland 2018, 115, 126.

<sup>12</sup> The monument included three Spartans besides Lysander: the navarch Arakos, whom Lysander technically seconded as *epistoleus* to avoid violation of the term limit on naval office-holding (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.7); Epikydidias; and Eteonikos, who had temporarily commanded the survivors of the Arginousai fleet (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.1-5) and may have led the landing party at Aigospotamoi (Diod. 13.106.4), although Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.28 attributes this command to Thorax, the harmost of Abydos. The other Spartans attested in the campaign are Sthenelaos, assigned command of the Bosphorus ports captured after Aigospotamoi (Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.2), and Gylippos, assigned to carry spoils back to Sparta (Diod. 13.106.8; Plut. *Lys.* 16.1-2).

<sup>13</sup> For the decisive impact of Persian financial aid, see Hyland 2018, 118-20.

<sup>14</sup> See note 6 above.

<sup>15</sup> The Athenian fleet at Aigospotamoi numbered 180 triremes (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.20; Diod. 13.105.1). Xenophon suggests that the entire fleet was caught on the beach (2.1.28), but Diodorus reports an initial sea engagement between Lysander's fleet and 30 Athenian ships (13.106.1-2); for reconstructions of the battle and approaches to the contradictory accounts of Xenophon and Diodorus, see Ehrhardt 1970; Strauss 1983 and 1987; Kagan 1987, 390-93; Lazenby 2004, 240-44; Naiden 2009, 736-38; Robinson 2014. Between nine and twelve Athenian ships escaped (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.28-29; Lys. 21.11; Diod. 13.106.6; Plut. *Lys.* 11.5-6), leaving the rest to fall into Spartan hands. On the post-battle massacre of about 3,000 Athenian prisoners (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.31-32, Plut. *Lys.* 13.1-2), see Strauss 1983, 132-34; Kagan 1987, 395; Lazenby 2004, 243-44; Kapellos 2018.

in the fall of 404 (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.8).<sup>16</sup> But this event followed the surrender of Samos, a year after Aigospotamoi, and it is improbable that he hauled along a cargo of more than a hundred rams for such an extended period. The rams that Xenophon mentions were more likely acquired from the smaller enemy force defeated at Samos, and whatever befell the Aigospotamoi ships, it would have occurred much sooner after the battle. Perhaps the Spartans removed the rams and other vital equipment from some, but they need not have discarded all of the valuable triremes now in their possession.

Xenophon gives Lysander a fleet of 200 ships on the subsequent voyage to Lesbos (2.2.5), noting the detachment of 10 for the reduction of Thrace (2.2.5), but repeating the figure of 200 for the journey to Athens itself (2.2.7); Plutarch follows the 200 figure (*Lys.* 14.1), and Diodorus refers to “more than 200” (13.107.2). Yet Xenophon reports that Lysander commanded 150 ships in the siege of Piraeus (2.2.9), a reduction missed by the later authors. What happened to the remainder of the fleet? A common assumption is that Lysander detached a squadron to contain enemy holdouts at Samos while he concentrated the main fleet at Athens.<sup>17</sup> But it is unclear why he would not have ordered this separate force from Lesbos to Samos at the start of the campaign, instead of bringing it to Athens and then returning it to the eastern Aegean at a later date.<sup>18</sup> A plausible alternative is that Lysander’s 200 ships included both the original fleet of about 150 that he had led at Aigospotamoi, and 50 of the most seaworthy Athenian prizes, manned by detachments from his original crews, which accompanied him to Athens but then continued on to Sparta. The home-bound triremes may have sailed with Gylippos, whom Lysander chose shortly after Aigospotamoi to take home a large sum of silver and miscellaneous spoils (Diod. 13.106.8).<sup>19</sup>

Xenophon’s account of Lysander’s dispositions after the siege of Samos in late summer 404 provides more explicit evidence for Sparta’s acquisition of triremes at the final surrender of Athens. Dismissing all allied contingents to their respective ports, the Spartan commander sailed home with the “Lakonian ships,” the aforementioned rams, and “the triremes from Piraeus, except twelve” (2.3.8). While the sources do not specify the size of Athens’ final naval reserve, for the confiscations of warships at Piraeus to carry maximum punitive effect, the captured vessels should have outnumbered those left behind and probably exceeded them in quality.<sup>20</sup> Xenophon’s testimony is preferable to Plutarch’s claim that Lysander burned the

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<sup>16</sup> Falkner 1992, 229.

<sup>17</sup> Lotze 1964, 39; Hamilton 1979, 45 n. 83; Green 1991, 7 n. 28; Lazenby 2004, 245. The Athenian force at Samos numbered only 20 ships (Diod. 13.104.2).

<sup>18</sup> Diod. 13.106.8 reports that Lysander began the Samos siege in fall 405, in between Aigospotamoi and the siege of Athens, and Lysander was visiting Samos in mid-winter when Theramenes’ embassy sought him there (Pap. Mich. 5982 lines 35-43; Merkelbach and Youtie 1968, 168-69; see also Henrichs 1968, 103-04; Andrewes 1970, 35). But Xenophon suggests that siege operations at Samos did not intensify until the summer of 404 (*Hell.* 2.2.6-7, 2.3.3, 2.3.6), which may be preferable in light of the logistical problems of a winter siege and the scale of operations at Athens; see Hamilton 1979, 55 n. 121; Green 1991, 6-8.

<sup>19</sup> Green 1991, 7 n. 26, argues persuasively that Gylippos’ mission should be dated soon after Aigospotamoi, following Diodorus’ account, instead of the aftermath of Athens’ surrender, where it is placed by Plut. *Lys.* 16.1. Diodorus’ term for spoils, *laphyra*, probably does not include the ships themselves (see Pritchett 1991, 132-47); but the extra ships would have been useful for transporting moveable plunder.

<sup>20</sup> The Aigospotamoi fleet had assembled as many triremes as possible from Athens and various other locations (Diod. 13.105.1). For the surrender of Athenian ships at Piraeus, see also *Lys.* 12.39, 68, and 13.14-15, 34,



Athenian triremes (*Lys.* 15.4), which Peter Green persuasively interprets as a “ceremonial” destruction of a handful of ships to accompany the destruction of the Long Walls.<sup>21</sup> Xenophon’s reference to Piraeus triremes in Lysander’s homecoming suggests that the entirety of the captured shipping went to Sparta rather than being divided among the allies.

This carries an important implication—as a result of the Athenian navy’s subjugation, Sparta’s trireme reserves expanded while those of its allies did not. Sparta increased its naval resources further by coercing the surrender of Elis’ triremes (*Diod.* 14.34.1), at the end of a campaign in which Corinth and Thebes refused to participate (*Xen. Hell.* 3.2.25; *Diod.* 14.17.7).<sup>22</sup> By the century’s end, the captured ships’ addition to Lysander’s original Spartan contingent and the new ships from Antandros should have expanded Sparta’s polis navy to at least 50 triremes (20 Spartan, 20 from Piraeus, and 10 from Elis?), and perhaps 100 or more if the Spartans kept a substantial number of intact Aigospotamoi prizes. The higher total would accord well with the 120 ships that the Spartans assembled at Rhodes in 396/5 (*Diod.* 14.79.4).

This rapid increase in Sparta’s trireme numbers suggests deliberate emulation of its Athenian imperial predecessor, and fits well with Lysander’s purported ambitions for an overseas Spartan empire. The change in the balance of power within the Peloponnesian alliance would have been a particular blow to the influence of Corinth, which had famously used its sea power as leverage to compel Spartan cooperation with its diplomatic demands on the eve of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>23</sup> It may have played a role in the alienation of the allies, especially as Sparta flaunted its enhanced coercive powers by requiring Athens to take an oath of participation in future Spartan naval campaigns.<sup>24</sup> Sparta’s diplomatic quarrels with Corinth and Thebes, which refused to participate in its intervention in the Athenian stasis of 403 or the Elis campaign and Persian War that followed, meant that it would now contribute the majority of the ships in any given campaign.<sup>25</sup>

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46. *Plut. Lys.* 15.1 follows Xenophon on the seizure of all but twelve triremes; *Diod.* 13.107.4 reduces the remaining Athenian squadron to ten. *Diod.* 14.3.5 has Lysander revisit Athens, en route back from Samos to supervise the appointment of the Thirty, and gives him a force of 100 ships; it is unclear whether this is meant to include some of the Peloponnesian allies before they split off for their home ports.

<sup>21</sup> Green 1991, 14–15; *contra* Bommelaer 1981, 148, which assumes a more general conflagration without noting the inclusion of triremes from Piraeus in Lysander’s homeward voyage.

<sup>22</sup> For Elis’ naval potential, see its contribution of both ten triremes and empty trireme hulls to Corinthian-led fleets before the outset of the Pel War (*Thuc.* 1.27, 45). Falkner 1992, 234, proposes that Sparta’s increased access to Elis’ ports permitted it to access western Greek waters while limiting its reliance on Corinth.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Salmon 1984, 339.

<sup>24</sup> Bolmarcich 2008, 77, argues that the oath to follow Sparta’s lead by land and sea was an innovation at the time of Athens’ surrender, and that important wartime allies such as Corinth and Thebes had cooperated with Sparta on a voluntary basis and had not sworn oaths of obedience.

<sup>25</sup> For Corinth’s and Thebes’ abstention from the Piraeus campaign, see *Xen. Hell.* 3.5.5, 3.5.8. Sparta compelled or persuaded Corinth into serving as an assembly point for Thibron’s expedition in 400 or 399 (*Diod.* 14.36.2), but it is unclear whether it sent any ships at this point; its refusal to contribute to Agesilaos’ anti-Persian campaign in 396 is explicitly attested (*Paus.* 3.9.2).

## Unilateral Naval Operations and the Spartan-Persian War

At first, the loss of the Corinthian and Boiotian contingents need not have impeded Sparta's naval operations. Post-war fleet sizes remained small and the captured ships added by Lysander more than made up the difference in overall numbers.<sup>26</sup> In the 403 expedition against the Athenian democrats at Piraeus, Lysander's brother, Libys, commanded only 40 triremes (Diod. 14.33.5). In 401, the navarch assigned to support the doomed rebellion of Cyrus against Artaxerxes II of Persia sailed to northern Phoenicia with a flotilla of 35.<sup>27</sup> But the onset of a large-scale campaign against a newly constructed Persian fleet between 396 and 394 would impose greater strains on Spartan resources. The Spartans gathered 120 triremes at Rhodes, but refused to commit them to battle, and despite a new fleet construction project, sent only 85 to Knidos. No study to date has offered an adequate explanation of this drop-off in available numbers.

When Sparta declared war on Persia in 400, it may have acted in the belief that the Achaemenid empire lacked naval resources for a large-scale Aegean war (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.2). Despite promises to do so in 411, the Persians had not actually sent a fleet into Greek waters since 479, and the Spartan ships that supported Cyrus in 401 met with no opposition.<sup>28</sup> The Persians made no attempt to interfere with Sparta's initial landings in Asia, and about 50 triremes probably sufficed to ferry the invasion force of 5,000 men to Ephesos and conduct small-scale raids on coastal territories that remained loyal to Persia.<sup>29</sup> In 397, when the Spartan general Derkylidas led an unsuccessful coastal campaign in the direction of pro-Persian Miletos, the unquantified naval force that accompanied him is unlikely to have been much larger (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.12, 14).<sup>30</sup>

The situation changed in the winter of 397/6 with the news that the Persians were gathering 300 triremes in Phoenicia, possibly threatening Sparta's control of the Aegean (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.1). While this report may have been incorrect, reflecting actual preparations for a Persian campaign against rebellious Egypt, it provided the pretext for Sparta's decision to send Agesilaos and Lysander to Ionia and escalate the scale of the land campaign. Xenophon makes

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Falkner 1992, 237.

<sup>27</sup> Xenophon is confused over the navarch's name, either Pythagoras (*Anab.* 1.4.2) or Samios (*Hell.* 3.1.1). Diod. 14.19.5 gives him 25; for his probable error on the size of Cyrus' fleet see Hyland 2018, 206 n. 55. Xenophon describes this fleet as Peloponnesian, but the secrecy of Cyrus' request for Spartan assistance points to a specifically Spartan origin (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.1; Diod. 14.19.4). No numbers are available for the fleet's other attested operations in the inter-war period, the campaign against Klearchos at Byzantion in 402 (Diod. 14.12.4-6) and Sparta's activities in the Bosphoros in 400 (Xen. *Anab.* 7.1-2)

<sup>28</sup> Hyland 2018, 134.

<sup>29</sup> On the assumption that a trireme used for troop transport could carry about 100 men (see Wallinga 2005, 100, citing evidence from Athens' Sicilian expedition, *contra* Morrison, Coates, and Rankov 2000, 226), this would give Thibron about 50 ships.

<sup>30</sup> *Contra* Falkner 1992, 238, it cannot be assumed that Pharax had 120 ships in 397 because of that number's attestation for the fleet at Rhodes in 396/5; such a large fleet would not have been necessary before the news that a Persian navy was approaching the Aegean, and Diodorus' association of Pharax with the 120 ships at Rhodes is a chronological error, as implied by the references to other navarchs at *Hell. Oxy.* 12.2-3. For the chronology and the sequence of navarchs, see March 1997, 260-62; Christien 2015, 338-39.

Lysander assure the Spartans that the fleet of “the Hellenes” would be “greatly superior” (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.2), but fails to explain the reasoning behind the veteran admiral’s assessment—did Lysander doubt the reported enemy numbers, or did he believe that the Spartans could win at sea despite their numerical inferiority?<sup>31</sup> Lysander played no further part in naval operations, instead accompanying Agesilaos at Ephesos and then conducting reconnaissance in the Hellespont and Propontis before returning home in early 395. But the Spartans now raised the size of their active fleet, assembling 120 ships at the allied harbor of Rhodes to oppose the Persian naval forces led by the exiled Athenian admiral Konon.

Sparta’s fleet at Rhodes was the largest naval force assembled in the Aegean since 404, but this time, it is doubtful that allied poleis provided a significant percentage of the ships. The sources are explicit on Corinth’s and Thebes’ non-participation, and the few Peloponnesian naval allies willing to comply with Spartan authority by 396 were unlikely to provide more than a handful; Rhodes’ Diagorid oligarchs were the only other plausible contributors.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that most of the fleet came from Sparta itself, and its size is best explained by the deployment of the ships that Lysander brought home in 405 and 404. Persia, however, possessed additional ships to reinforce Konon’s forces, whereas the lack of allies limited Sparta’s ability to increase its fleet further, and the campaign’s outcome suggests that the Spartan fleet was unsustainable in real campaign conditions.

The Spartans took the initiative at the beginning of the campaign, trapping Konon’s 40 ships in the Carian port of Kaunos and attempting to besiege the city, but their blockade proved ineffective (Diod. 14.79.4-5).<sup>33</sup> The logistical challenges must have been severe, requiring the maintenance of an exposed mainland base, dependent on supply shipments from Rhodes, without the ability to assault the rocky, fortified hills that surrounded Kaunos’ inner harbor, or to cut off the northern approaches to the city which were covered by Mount Imbros. The Spartans might have been able to intimidate Konon into keeping his triremes in port, but even if they possessed enough men to raid up the Dalyan River valley in the direction of Lake Köyçegiz, they probably lacked the capacity to fully cut off inland sources of supply.<sup>34</sup> The appearance of fresh Persian forces brought the siege to an ignominious end (Diod. 14.79.5), and soon thereafter, the arrival of large naval contingents from Cilicia and Phoenicia expanded the Persian fleet to either 130 or 170 triremes; at Konon’s approach, the Rhodians rose up

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Buckler 2003, 59.

<sup>32</sup> The fleet’s initial assembly at Geraistos did not require Euboian participation, any more than Agesilaos’ visit to Aulis succeeded in recruiting Boiotian vessels; the Euboians joined the anti-Spartan camp in 394 (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.17, 4.3.15). Of the Peloponnesian participants in the Aigospotamoi fleet, those in a position to join the Spartan fleet in the Corinthian War were limited to Pellene, Sikyon, Epidauros, Troizen, and Hermione; in 412 these together had been deemed capable of building less than 20 ships (Thuc. 8.3.2). Bresson 2010, 441, estimates Rhodes’ potential contribution as 10 to 20 ships. That would imply that 80 or 90 of the triremes at Rhodes belonged to Sparta itself.

<sup>33</sup> Diodorus is vague on the chronology of the Kaunos siege; for a probable date between the fall of 396 and early spring 395, see Hyland 2018, 135-136, 208 n. 113.

<sup>34</sup> The author gained a first-hand view of the region’s topography in a drive down the winding road from Sultaniye to Kaunos and back up to the lake in May 2017. The Spartan base at Sasanda, if equivalent with the known site of Pasanda (Nielsen 2002, 55 n. 50), was on the far side of the bay southeast of the river mouth, almost five miles away as the crow flies; even if Diodorus’ figure of 150 stades between Kaunos and Sasanda is an exaggeration, the distance would only have exacerbated the difficulty in waging a serious siege.

against the Spartan fleet, and the navarch chose to abandon Rhodes without a fight (*Hell. Oxy.* 12.2-3; Diod. 14.79.6, 8).<sup>35</sup>

The Spartan retreat from Rhodes was a disaster, costing them their principal base of supply in the southern Aegean (and slightly reducing the fleet's size through the removal of the Rhodian contingent).<sup>36</sup> The sources do not explain the reasons for the bloodless evacuation, but it probably implies a lack of confidence in the quality of ships or crews, paired with the fear of superior enemy numbers. The loss of Theban and Corinthian squadrons mattered now in a way that it had not a few years before, as the presence of additional triremes from Sparta's former allies might have maintained great parity with the size of the enemy fleet.

Xenophon, who passes over the campaign at Kaunos and Rhodes in silence, returns briefly to naval affairs with the report that Sparta honored Agesilaos' success in the land campaign of 395 by granting him naval command as well. This extension of authority probably reflects the official response to the Rhodian fiasco. Agesilaos sought to address concerns about ship numbers by ordering the construction of 120 new triremes in the Ionian cities and the Aegean islands, delegating their command to his inexperienced brother-in-law Peisandros (*Xen. Hell.* 3.4.27-29).<sup>37</sup> It is unclear whether these were envisioned as reinforcements or outright replacements for the ships that had served at Rhodes. The construction locations in the eastern Aegean, as opposed to Lakedaimonian territory, may indicate an effort to build a new allied fleet that would technically belong to the contributing Ionian poleis, while following Spartan commands, similar to Agesilaos' efforts to raise troops from the Ionian cities that he claimed to be protecting from Persian aggression. Perhaps the Spartans hoped that Ephesos, Chios, and other east Greek well-wishers could prove suitable replacements for the mainland Greek naval allies that had once supported Spartan power. But it is questionable whether a handful of coastal cities and island centers possessed sufficient material resources and funding, not to mention the political willpower, to carry out a major naval construction program at Sparta's behest without financial support. In any event, Agesilaos' naval construction efforts paid limited dividends, as Peisandros had only 85 triremes ready for battle in the summer of 394 (Diod. 14.83.4-5). It is unclear how many of these were new and how many belonged to the fleet that had taken part in the Rhodes campaign (or what had happened to its other remnants).<sup>38</sup> Nine months should have sufficed for the completion of new ships, as suggested by the rapid building programs of the Peloponnesian War, but only if sufficient resources were available for construction and recruitment of crews. By the time of Knidos, the Persians also seem to have reduced the size of their own Aegean fleet, yet still kept enough to retain the numerical advantage.<sup>39</sup> When battle was finally joined, Xenophon and Diodorus agree that the new allied ships were the first to flee, leaving Peisandros and his Spartan

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<sup>35</sup> On the problem of the Persian fleet's size and the reconciliation of the figures in Diodorus and the *Hellenika Oxyrhynchia*, see Hyland 2018, 136, 209 n. 117.

<sup>36</sup> Bresson 2010, 441.

<sup>37</sup> Xenophon does not specify the shipbuilding sites; an obvious candidate would be Ephesos given its Peloponnesian War era naval infrastructure and role as Agesilaos' headquarters, but Chios and other islands might have contributed as well.

<sup>38</sup> Krentz 1995, 193, imagines an augmentation of the earlier fleet but assumes that some of the ships were only fit for service as transports.

<sup>39</sup> See Hyland 2018, 143-146, 212 n. 185.

triremes to be overwhelmed by enemy numbers (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.12; Diod. 14.83.6). Most of the Ionian cities promptly went over to Konon and Pharnabazos without even token resistance, suggesting a lack of deep allegiance to the Spartan cause as long as the Persians promised lenient treatment (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.2).

Sparta's ultimate inferiority in ship numbers was a crucial component in the naval disaster of 394.<sup>40</sup> Without Corinth and Thebes, Sparta was only able to muster the largest number of warships in the Aegean in the absence of a naval opponent capable of deploying a large fleet. Once the Persian threat materialized in full, Sparta quickly fell behind. A belated recognition of the danger may explain an incident that otherwise looks like an egregious case of overextension at the time of Agesilaos' campaign. Pharax, the navarch of 398/7, sailed to Sicily in 396 with an unspecified, if probably modest, number of triremes; there, ironically serving alongside Corinthian vessels, Spartan ships assisted Dionysios I in his successful defense against the Carthaginian siege of Syracuse (Diod. 14.63.4, 70.1-2, 72.1). In hindsight, one might castigate Sparta for sending warships west at the time of the looming naval crisis in the Aegean.<sup>41</sup> But when Pharax left for the west, the Spartans had not yet lost Rhodes, and they might have sought to fulfill their obligations to Dionysios precisely because of Syracuse' potential to send naval aid against Persia if he survived the Carthaginian threat.<sup>42</sup> A Syracusan contingent had acquired a positive reputation in the Peloponnesian fleet of 412-409, before its recall for the Carthaginian War, and hopes of its return may have appeared to justify the risk of withdrawing a few of Sparta's ships from the Aegean. In fact, Syracusan friendship would bear fruit for the Spartans at the end of the Corinthian War in 387 (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.26, 28); but in the context of the Rhodes and Knidos campaigns, the pursuit of western alliance in compensation for the loss of Peloponnesian naval allies worsened Sparta's critical shortage of battle-ready triremes.

### Trireme Upkeep and Material Shortfalls

This brings us to the pressing question of why the Spartans were reluctant to commit their 120 ships to battle at Kaunos and Rhodes, and why their ship numbers declined so rapidly thereafter despite Agesilaos' and Peisandros' counter-measures. The answer should go beyond Peisandros' personal failings or a mere quantification of trireme hulls. Overall seaworthiness, conditions of sails, rigging, oars, and other equipment, and the experience and morale of the crews that manned them were all crucial factors in the effectiveness of trireme navies. The evidence suggests that inadequacies in all of these categories limited the combat effectiveness of Sparta's fleet by the time of Knidos.

One pressing problem was the significant age gap between Sparta's triremes and Persia's new fleet. It is well known that triremes' speed and seaworthiness decreased with

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<sup>40</sup> Strauss 2009, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Falkner 1992, 244.

<sup>42</sup> It may be relevant that Sparta's initial source of information on Persia's naval escalation in the winter of 397/6 was a Syracusan ship captain (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.1).



age.<sup>43</sup> The Persian warships of the mid-390s were products of a recent building program ordered by Artaxerxes II in preparation for the reconquest of Egypt.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the ships that Lysander brought back to Sparta in 405 and 404 were ten or more years old by the time of the Rhodes and Knidos campaigns, especially in the cases of any captured Athenian ships that had been constructed in the years before the Arginousai and Aigospotamoi campaigns. Triremes in their second decade were preferred for use as transports rather than combat ships, and several scholars have suggested that most of Sparta's ships in 395 fit the former description.<sup>45</sup>

The sources offer no indication of new ship-building at Sparta, and it is unclear that the Spartans were in a position to give Lysander's expanded fleet the upkeep it required to mitigate the effects of the aging process. By the end of the Peloponnesian War, they had built harbor facilities for the storage and repair of triremes at Gytheion in response to wartime need.<sup>46</sup> But the care of a fleet that was two to four times larger than the wartime navy would have required a great deal of additional construction, including many more shipsheds as well as the assemblage of new stockpiles of nautical equipment. The costs for such building would have been high—several decades later, Athens would spend 240 talents to replace the storehouses for its triremes' hanging equipment.<sup>47</sup> While the nest egg from Cyrus was still available and Lysander might have found such an investment appealing, his political opponents were already able to execute or exile some of his prominent supporters and reverse a number of his undertakings in 403; it seems doubtful that he was able to complete an expansion of port facilities on the required scale in the increasingly contested political climate.<sup>48</sup>

An increasing shortage of materials for aging Spartan ships would fit well with Diodorus' account of Sparta's attempted alliance with the Egyptian pharaoh Nephertites in 396, at the same time as the naval campaign at Rhodes and Kaunos. Nephertites agreed to furnish the Spartans with a large aid convoy, which carried not only a substantial amount of grain for military rations but above all "equipment (*skeuēn*) for 100 triremes"; but the convoy arrived at Rhodes just after the Spartan withdrawal and the city's surrender to Konon, and unwittingly fell into Persian hands without a fight (Diod. 14.79.4,7). The fact that Egypt sent nautical materiel almost matching the number of ships in the Spartan fleet suggests a shortage of essentials needed for combat readiness, probably papyrus and linen for ropes and sails, which

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<sup>43</sup> Casson 1995, 90; Morrison, Coates, and Rankov 2000, 199-200. Eddy 1968, 146-47, estimates that Athens needed to build fifteen new triremes per year to keep up the 300-ship fleet size with which it entered the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>44</sup> See Lewis 1977, 141; Cawkwell 2005, 162-63; Ruzicka 2012, 42-43; Hyland 2018, 134-135.

<sup>45</sup> Falkner 1992, 246; Krentz 1995, 193.

<sup>46</sup> Falkner 1994, 497-98. Tolmides burned Spartan shipyards in the 1<sup>st</sup> Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 1.108.5); Diod. 11.84.6 specifies their location at Gytheion but Falkner 1994, 495, cautions that the location may be anachronistic. The Classical shipshed remains have not yet been found; see Blackman and Rankov 2013, 20 n. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Gabrielsen 2014, 41. For the massive scale of the naval support facilities at Piraeus, see Lovén and Schaldemose 2011.

<sup>48</sup> For studies of Lysander's political efforts and partial loss of influence between 403 and 401, see Andrewes 1971, 212-13; Hamilton 1979, 76-97; Bommelaer 1981, 151-71; Cartledge 1987, 93-94.



Egypt possessed in abundance.<sup>49</sup> The absence of essentials for refitting Spartan triremes may help to explain the evacuation of Rhodes in the first place, as aging ships without adequate sails and cordage had little chance of successful maneuver against brand-new enemy vessels. It may also speak to the inadequacy of the Ionian ships constructed in 395-394 with whatever remaining materials lay at hand, and the apparent decision not to use all of the hulls in Sparta's possession at Knidos.

## The Challenges of Naval Recruitment

An additional factor in Sparta's naval crisis was the attrition of skilled personnel in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War. Effective naval recruitment involved two categories of manpower: small groups of veteran *hyperēsiai*, the deck officers and able hands essential to triremes' competent management and crew training; and large complements of oarsmen, 170 per trireme, capable of mastering the synchronized rowing necessary for maximum speed and maneuverability.<sup>50</sup> There is reason to think that Sparta struggled to acquire both officers and men in sufficient numbers due to the political and financial circumstances of the post-war years.

An anecdote in Plutarch suggests that Lysander was considering the problem of future *hyperēsiai* recruitment at the same time as he sought to expand the size of the Spartan fleet. Shortly after the end of the war, he established a naval colony at the nearby Hellespontine port of Sestos, expelling all the residents and handing over both polis and *chora* "to divide up among those who had served him as *kybernētai* (helmsmen) and *keleustai* (boatswains)" (*Lys.* 14.2).<sup>51</sup> Many of these men are likely to have been mercenaries, like Lysander's personal *kybernētēs* Hermon, who had previously lived as a metic at Megara (*Paus.* 10.9.4; *Dem.* 23.212), and the admiral's generosity offered them the possibility of a new home in common with their fellow naval personnel.<sup>52</sup> This project built on the precedent of earlier Spartan settlements at strategic locations, such as the posting of the emancipated Brasideian helot-soldiers at Lepreon (*Thuc.* 5.34) and the colony at Herakleia near Thermopylai (*Thuc.* 3.92-93);<sup>53</sup> and like the founders of Herakleia, Lysander is likely to have called not only on Lakedaimonians, but

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<sup>49</sup> Kienitz 1953, 79-80; Lewis 1977, 141 n. 43; Ruzicka 2012, 50; Hyland 2018, 135-37.

<sup>50</sup> For the importance of the *hyperēsiai* (numbering 16 in the ideal Athenian trireme), see Gabrielsen 1994, 106-08; Morrison, Coates, and Rankov 2000, 111-18; Wallinga 2005, 104-06; Naiden 2009, 738-39. Veteran rowers were particularly valuable when available, as illustrated by *Thuc.* 7.13.2-14.1: Nikias complains of the rapid decline of Athenian crew quality in Sicily because of casualties, desertion, and an intake of new slave rowers, and refers to the usual scarcity of crew members competent at launching and rowing the ships. That being said, less experienced rowers were not always incapable of learning their trade quickly, as demonstrated by the Athenian victory at Arginousai despite a last-minute draft of all able-bodied men, even cavalrymen (*Xen. Hell.* 1.6.24), which had allegedly rendered their triremes inferior to the Peloponnesians in naval maneuvers (1.6.31).

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch mentions this episode alongside the capture of Sestos after Aigospotamoi; but as the fleet continued operations for another year, it is better placed after the fleet's dispersal in 404; see Lotze 1964, 59; Rahe 1977, 232 n. 22; Hamilton 1979, 44; Bommelaer 1981, 151 n. 208.

<sup>52</sup> See Lotze 1964, 59; Rahe 1977, 183; Legon 1981, 255-56 n. 77.

<sup>53</sup> See Bommelaer 1981, 210.

also on well-disposed men from the allied cities to help his project succeed. Sestos was a polis of substantial size, incorporating much of the central Chersonese in its territory;<sup>54</sup> if its entire land-owning population was replaced, this probably suggests that Lysander's invitation extended not only to men who served on the handful of Spartan ships at Aigospotamoi, but rather to the *kybernētai* and *keleustai* of the entire Peloponnesian fleet, between 300 and 400 men, if not a larger group including other *hyperēsiai* as well.<sup>55</sup> The Sestos colony bore important implications for the future of Spartan naval power: a land grant to essential naval personnel, concentrating them in a separate polis in a position of personal dependence on Lysander and Sparta, could simplify their future recruitment as well as limiting the allies' ability to hire these specialists for their own fleets.

But Spartan politics sabotaged Lysander's plans in this regard. In the same sentence, Plutarch reports not only the colony's establishment but also the Spartan authorities' decision, as a first act of resistance to Lysander's overweening personal power, to restore the Sestian refugees to their native polis (Lys. 14.2).<sup>56</sup> No other source refers to the episode, and it is unclear whether any of Lysander's veterans remained in Sestos or gave way entirely to the returning citizens; in any case, the probable dispersal of some of the naval colonists is likely to have compromised their future sense of loyalty to Sparta.

The acquisition of rowers might have seemed a simpler proposition, as tens of thousands of veterans were available in the wake of the Peloponnesian War. It is likely that actual Spartan triremes during the Peloponnesian War relied in part on helot rowers (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.12), and possibly on *desposionautai*, a term defined by a late source as referring to former helots freed for the purpose of naval service (Myron *FGrH* 106 F1).<sup>57</sup> But helots alone were probably insufficient to meet the demands of Sparta's enlarged post-Peloponnesian War fleet, and the social unrest of the early fourth century was also likely to discourage their excessive naval employment.<sup>58</sup> The rest of Lysander's crews had included mercenary oarsmen

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<sup>54</sup> Sestos' territory incorporated a significant portion of the central Chersonese; between 2012 and 2017, Turkish archaeological surveys at Sestos (Akbaş) under the direction of Reyhan Körpe have found traces of the polis walls (see the *Uluslararası Kazı, Araştırma ve Arkeometri Sempozyumu* series for annual project reports). Körpe and Yavuz 2006 propose a connection between a decline in pottery sherds at other sites in the Chersonese, dated around the beginning of the fourth century, and Lysander's expulsion of Athenian settlers from the region.

<sup>55</sup> It cannot be ruled out that Lysander's offer extended to all the *hyperēsiai*, which would expand the number of beneficiaries to between 2,400 and 3,200. Gómez-Castro 2018, 58, views the episode as an example of Lysander's gathering of support within Sparta's "'inferior' class," but Plutarch does not specify a Lakedaimonian (or helot) origin for the men in question.

<sup>56</sup> Plutarch attributes the decision to "the Lakedaimonians," unfortunately failing to specify the specific government body responsible.

<sup>57</sup> For helot service on Spartan ships, see Falkner 1992, 217, 225, 229; Bertosa 2005, 4-9; Strauss 2009, 45. The *desposionautai* remain enigmatic, but may have formed a more privileged group of rowers compared with helots, or perhaps even helmsmen or other deck officers who rose from helot origin; see Bertosa 2005, 9-11; Naiden 2009, 738.

<sup>58</sup> See Cartledge 2009, 53, 54 n. 35. The Spartans had freed moderate numbers of helots for military service during the Peloponnesian War and sent almost 2,000 of these *neodamodeis* with Agesilaos' army as hoplites in 396 (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.2), but the sources do not speak of additional waves of emancipation at this time.

from all over the Peloponnese, and probably some recruits obtained in Ionian ports.<sup>59</sup> In theory, the loss of allies such as Corinth and Thebes might not have diminished Sparta's access to hired rowers who lacked the attachment of native citizens to these poleis, and perhaps such men might have journeyed to Tainaron or Gytheion in search of employment; alternatively, the Spartan fleet might have sailed for the eastern Aegean with under-strength crews and attempted to recruit their manpower within the actual conflict zone in Ionia and the islands. But the greater question was whether Sparta could afford its mercenary rowers' wages with the end of the Persian funding arrangements that had facilitated victory over Athens. Even helot rowers were paid, and a steady wage was essential for crews' retention.<sup>60</sup>

In the final years of the Peloponnesian War, Lysander had been able to increase the size and quality of the Peloponnesian fleet because of the money provided by the Persian prince Cyrus (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.13-15), who surpassed the initial 500-talent grant provided by Darius II in 407 and spent a substantial part of his personal fortune to ensure Spartan victory. Cyrus famously permitted Lysander to raise the wage of each Peloponnesian sailor to four obols a day instead of the three that Athens was struggling to pay its rowers (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.6-7). This increase, and the stability of payments, especially after Cyrus' massive final donation in 405, not only increased naval morale but may have lured professional seamen away from the Athenian fleet (Plut. *Lys.* 4.7).<sup>61</sup> But after the war, with Cyrus gone and the remnants of his donations dwindling, Sparta needed to find new sources of funding if it wished to attract its veterans back to its fleets, especially in competition with a growing Persian navy in the eastern Mediterranean. The memory of Cyrus' generosity may have turned to a disadvantage in this regard, as it was likely to require that Sparta match his higher rates of pay to retain the oarsmen who had served in the heyday of Lysander's partnership with the Persian prince. Where was this funding to come from when Sparta went to war with Persia?

### **Spartan Naval Finance in the Absence of Persian Aid**

This brings us to the final examination of Sparta's naval finance system. Victory over Athens had resulted in significant short-term profit, enough to offend the allies with whom Sparta refused to share its spoils, but far from enough to meet its long-term needs. Fifth-century Athens, despite shifting the financial burden of supporting the fleet's personnel onto the backs of the liturgic elites, had paid out enormous expenses in ship replacements and logistical costs; David Pritchard's recent study estimates that each campaign season of the Ionian War cost Athens an average of 600 talents, a substantial portion of which had to be drawn from the state's treasury (or campaign plunder).<sup>62</sup> Sparta lacked an equivalent to the liturgic system, and depended almost entirely on Persian subsidies in Lysander's final campaigns. When it went to war with Persia, Sparta's principal resources for naval pay encompassed spoils

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<sup>59</sup> For the predominance of mercenaries in the Peloponnesian fleet see Kagan 1987, 311; Falkner 1992, 216; Lazenby 2004, 224; Bertosa 2005, 18.

<sup>60</sup> See Bertosa 2005, 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> For the details and scale of Cyrus' contributions see Hyland 2018, 116-120.

<sup>62</sup> Pritchard 2015, 99.

collected at the end of the Peloponnesian War and subsequent tribute collections—and neither of these were adequate to support a large fleet in a lengthy naval war.

The total spoils of victory in 405-404 were impressive but finite, amounting to a figure in the vicinity of 2,000 talents; the plunder from Aigospotamoi and captured cities came to something like 1,000 or 1,500 (Diod. 13.106.8; Plut. *Nic.* 28.3), and Xenophon reports that Lysander endowed the Spartan treasury with 470 talents remaining from the donation of Cyrus, which had been meant to cover the fleet's wages (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.8).<sup>63</sup> This latter sum represented between three and four months' pay if Lysander's fleet numbered 200 ships with full strength crews, and between four and five months' pay if it numbered 150.<sup>64</sup> The deposit at Sparta of naval funds dispensed by Cyrus to cover the wages of all the Peloponnesian contingents is likely to have offended Sparta's naval allies; quarrels over the distribution of spoils after Athens' surrender feature prominently among the causes of Corinthian and Theban estrangement, and several sources mention Theban anger at Lysander's failure to share money that he brought home (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.12; Plut. *Lys.* 27.2; Just. 5.10.12-13).<sup>65</sup> But if the treasure concentrated at Sparta was enough to arouse allied jealousy, it was nevertheless far smaller than Athens' financial reserves at the start of the Peloponnesian War. The Spartans expended some of it immediately on the hundred-talent loan to the Thirty at Athens (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.28; Plut. *Lys.* 21.2), as well as pay for small naval squadrons and garrisons, and supply and transportation costs for the Asian expedition. By the time of the build-up for the Rhodian campaign, Lysander's nest egg would have been somewhat depleted.

For additional funding, Sparta could rely on the tribute that it levied across Aegean Greece beginning in 405 or 404; its collections also targeted the coastal poleis of Anatolia, whose revenues Cyrus turned over to Lysander when he left Sardis for court between 405 and late 404 or 403. But the precise scale of income is subject to debate, and it is likely that it decreased by 403, as stasis became endemic throughout much of Ionia and the Spartan government ceased support for Lysander's puppet governments, the so-called *dekarchies*.<sup>66</sup> Diodorus claims that the Spartans in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War were collecting 1,000 talents a year (14.10.2), and the "alliance" coinage issued by a large number of east Aegean and Anatolian coastal cities at this period may belong to the tributary context.<sup>67</sup> But Diodorus' exact figure is likely exaggerated, and perhaps derived from estimates of the old Athenian tribute exactions on the assumption that Sparta took them over root and branch (cf. Xen. *Anab.* 7.1.27).<sup>68</sup> H.W.

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<sup>63</sup> Hamilton 1979, 55, 65; David 1979-1980, 38-40. For this sum as supportive of "supreme naval power," see Falkner 1992, 230; but Bommelaer 1981, 162-63, astutely notes the limitation of Spartan naval finance compared with its Athenian predecessor. See also Hamilton 1979, 41-42; Buckler 2003, 43, 59; Naiden 2009, 743.

<sup>64</sup> On Cyrus' donation and the leftover change, see Hyland 2018, 116-117, 123. 470 talents equals 2,828,000 drachmai. Cyrus' and Lysander's monthly pay rate came to 20 drachmai per man; at full strength, a fleet of 200 triremes required 40,000 men, costing 800,000 drachmai per month, and 150 triremes held 30,000 men, costing 600,000.

<sup>65</sup> Sparta, for its part, accused Thebes of sacrilegious financial impropriety in keeping the tithe from the Dekeleia spoils that Sparta wished to dedicate at Delphi (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.5, Plut. *Lys.* 27.2).

<sup>66</sup> See Andrewes 1971, 206-16; Lewis 1994, 40; Hyland 2018, 125-26.

<sup>67</sup> See note 10 above.

<sup>68</sup> Hamilton 1979, 61; Westlake 1986, 409 n. 13; Lewis 1994, 31 n. 30; Green 2010, 279 n. 12; Rutishauser 2012, 143.

Parke, in the most detailed argument in favor of the Diodoran figure's accuracy, assumed that Sparta's tribute income could have reached 1,000 talents even after the end of collections in Cyrus' Anatolian poleis.<sup>69</sup> But Parke's hypothesis was based on circular logic, calculating potential Spartan income based on the number of soldiers and sailors it employed in the year 399/8, and assuming that the state's agents gathered enough income to pay them effectively. Parke estimated that during the first year of the Spartan campaign in Asia, Thibron's 8,000 soldiers, 6,000 surviving Cyreian mercenaries (cf. Xen. *Anab.* 7.7.23) and 2,000 Ionian volunteers, earned 96,000 darics or 400 Attic talents at the Persian monthly rate of a daric per man. But the Cyreians who joined Thibron may have numbered only 5,000 (Diod. 14.37.1); there is no evidence that the Spartans paid their expeditionary force or particularly the Ionian city militias for their service; and shortage of pay may have contributed to the notorious plundering of allied territory which prompted Thibron's removal from command (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.8, 3.2.6). It is possible, in other words, that the Spartans hired only 5,000 mercenaries, who required a total of 250 Attic talents, and struggled to pay this sum in full. Furthermore, Sparta's employment of the Cyreian mercenaries in 399 was an escalation from previous years' expenses and cannot provide evidence for Sparta's monetary income between 404 and 400. Parke also estimated a wage total for the crews of the 35 ships that aided Cyrus in 401; but his sums are based on the assumption that they drew salary for twelve months, rather than the three or four that it probably took the fleet to meet Cyrus' ships, sail to Issos, rendezvous with the rebel army, and return home.<sup>70</sup> Working from these flawed calculations, Parke nevertheless came up short, with a combined estimate of 600 talents for combined army and navy pay; he rounded this up to 1,000, almost doubling the sum by assuming garrisons and miscellaneous expenses at unnamed locations, in order to support the assertion that the Spartans successfully collected 1,000 talents a year that allowed them to meet these supposed costs. The danger of using such strained logic to salvage the historicity of a statistic in Diodorus should be obvious.

A more compelling defense of Diodorus' estimate stresses that Athens' collections had not necessarily tapped into all of the local wealth available for exploitation. Paul Cartledge suggests that "super-rich oligarchs will have been happier to pay protection money to an imperial power that promoted rather than undermined their local domination."<sup>71</sup> But such voluntary contributions may have declined after the fall of the dekharchies. In particular, Miletos, one of the largest Ionian poleis and a financial supporter of Spartan naval activity during the Peloponnesian War, expelled its Lysandrian oligarchs after civil conflict in 403-402 and remained firmly in the Persian camp throughout the conflict of the 390s.<sup>72</sup> Even after the Spartans sent significant numbers of troops to Asia, one may question whether the elites of the

<sup>69</sup> Parke 1930, 56 n. 35; David 1979-80, 43.

<sup>70</sup> Parke 1930, 56 n. 35: 210 talents at a three-obol rate for twelve months (35 triremes x 200 men = 3,500 drachmai per day = 105,000 drachmai/17.5 talents per month). At Cyrus' old four-obol rate, this would increase to 4,620 drachmai per day and 138,600 drachmai or 23.1 talents per month. A four-month naval campaign by a 35-ship squadron, even at the higher pay rate, would cost between 70 and 92.4 talents, less than half of Parke's estimate.

<sup>71</sup> Cartledge 1987, 89.

<sup>72</sup> On Miletos in the Spartan-Persian war see Hyland 2018, 128, 136, 162.



Ionian cities that stayed in their alliance were willing to turn over substantial amounts of wealth without direct coercion.

It is clear from Xenophon's description of the land campaigning of 399-397 in Asia that the Spartan expeditionary force spent a significant amount of time attempting to secure sources of silver and supply—perhaps a significant reason for Derkylidas' campaigns in the Troad, Chersonese, and Aiolis rather than against Tissaphernes' bases in Caria and Lydia (*Hell.* 3.1.8-28, 3.2.1-2, 3.2.11). It appears that the Spartans may not have possessed enough financial capital at home to meet the needs of their army, to say nothing of the expanded forces that arrived with Agesilaos in 396, which consumed half their foodstuffs before active campaigning began, or particularly the expanded fleet at Rhodes and Kaunos.<sup>73</sup> Between 403 and 397, the Spartans were paying wages for maybe 35 to 50 ships' crews, which could have been undermanned given the lack of naval opposition; at 100 men per ship (as opposed to the standard 200), that would be 3,500 to 5,000 men, deployed on relatively short campaigns. But once the Persian naval threat prompted the deployment of 120 ships, even half-strength crews added up to 12,000 men, and the full strength crews needed to reach peak effectiveness in battle required 24,000. The new naval deployment was not limited to a summer sailing season, but began with Agesilaos' transportation to Asia in the spring or early summer of 396 and continued through the evacuation of Rhodes in 395 and beyond. The resulting surge in expenses would have been tremendous, especially if the Spartans attempted to pay the rowers the same four-obol daily salary that they had dispensed in the previous conflict thanks to Cyrus' generosity—and if they did not, it might have been harder to attract veteran rowers who remembered serving in Lysander's fleet under better conditions. At full strength, the Spartan fleet of 120 ships would have cost 60 talents a month at the three-obol wage and 80 talents at the four-obol wage, adding up to between 720 and 960 talents over the first year of the expanded naval campaign, on top of the expenses for Agesilaos' army and the garrisons stationed in the Ionian cities.<sup>74</sup>

These sums make it likely that Sparta struggled to pay regular wages for a full-strength fleet throughout the protracted campaign at Rhodes and Kaunos, and that its fleet remained under-manned as a result of the significant costs involved.<sup>75</sup> Without the support of their campaign by an outside funder of tremendous financial depth, such as Persia in the last war, the Spartans did not have the economic capacity to sustain a large-scale naval war. Perhaps their diplomatic outreach to Egypt sought to allay some of these financial concerns, but the pharaoh could not match Persia's economic capacities; the accounts of Nepherites' Rhodian convoy make no reference to monetary subsidies, and given silver's relative scarcity and resulting high value within the Egyptian economy, one might expect some Egyptian reluctance to spend large amounts on an overseas ally.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Buckler 2003, 61-62.

<sup>74</sup> 24,000 men x 3 obols per day = 72,000 obols a day = 2,160,000 obols/ 360,000 drachmai/ 60 talents per month; 12,000 men x 4 obols per day = 96,000 obols a day = 2,880,000 obols/ 480,000 drachmai/ 80 talents per month.

<sup>75</sup> See Buckler 2003, 59. Compare Thuc. 8.44.4 on the Spartans' difficulty in obtaining wages for 94 triremes in an 80-day stay at Rhodes in 411, in the days of the united Peloponnesian fleet.

<sup>76</sup> For the role of silver in fourth-century Egyptian policy, see Colburn 2018, 76-81, 92-93.



The Spartans were hardly alone in their financial difficulties, as illustrated by the wage interruption that provoked mutiny in Konon's crews at Kaunos and Rhodes in the later summer of 395. But it is noteworthy that despite the dire situation of the Persian fleet, its mercenary rowers and *hyperēsiai* do not seem to have considered desertion to the Spartan side (*Hell. Oxy.* 23.1-4). Sparta was far less capable of solving the financial difficulties associated with the deployment of naval power, whereas Konon, after putting down the mutiny with force, was able to address the problem through a court visit that secured a new royal grant of sufficient funds for the campaign seasons that followed (*Diod.* 14.81.4-6).<sup>77</sup> The depletion of average crew sizes would have been chronic in a Spartan fleet under such conditions, and this probably forced Peisandros to abandon his least seaworthy triremes and concentrate larger groups of rowers in the best available ships, thereby contributing to the fleet's overall numerical disadvantage.<sup>78</sup>

### Epilogue: Rebuilding a Coalition (392-370)

In the disaster at Knidos, the Spartan fleet lost 50 ships outright and the other 35, leaderless, probably fell into Persian hands during Pharnabazos' and Konon's subsequent coastal campaign. Over the fall of 394, the Persian fleet sailed up the coast to the Hellespont and gained welcomes in almost every port, as democratic factions toppled Lysander's statues and erected Konon's in their place. Sestos, once home to Lysander's abortive naval colony, welcomed Konon despite his failure to reduce Derkylidas' garrison at Abydos across the straits. Xenophon's reference to Konon filling many new ships in the spring of 393, without mention of new ship-building (*Hell.* 4.8.7), may imply the additional capture of some of the newly built Ionian triremes ordered by Agesilaos in 395. That summer, Pharnabazos and Konon ravaged the coast of the Peloponnese and installed a garrison of mercenary marauders on Kythera to continue the damage. Sparta lacked sufficient ships to oppose them, and by early 392, was prepared to seek peace with Persia, while hoping to eliminate Persian support for its Greek opponents in the Corinthian War. Its naval failure, in contrast with military successes on land, was the principal cause of Sparta's willingness to abandon its tributary demands over other poleis and claims of Ionian autonomy from the Persian empire. The limits of its access to allied ships, veteran sailors, and the money to pay for them had fatally compromised its aspiration of replacing Athens' naval hegemony.

In closing, it is instructive to note the Spartans' apparent efforts to address some of their maritime missteps in a period of limited naval resurgence between the collapse of the 392 peace talks and the acceptance of Artaxerxes' similar terms in 387, as well as the temporary restoration of Sparta's mainland Greek hegemony after the King's Peace. Mustering their remaining resources, the Spartans proved more successful in waging small-scale naval war against opponents of similar scale, benefiting from Konon's downfall in 392 and the withdrawal of the Persian fleet from the Aegean (in the context of Persia's Egyptian

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<sup>77</sup> See Hyland 2018, 145.

<sup>78</sup> See *Xen. Hell.* 1.5.20 for a comparable case in which the Athenians reduced the size of a fleet in the interest of obtaining full-strength crews.

preoccupation and the growing troubles on Cyprus). With a dozen ships under Teleutias, they wrested control of the Corinthian gulf away from the Corinthians in 392-391 (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.23). They gradually expanded their fleet to more than thirty triremes (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.6-7)—through new construction or use of old ships against opponents with a similar scarcity of resources?—and achieved partial successes in regaining some eastern Aegean footholds and supporting an oligarchic faction in a stasis at Rhodes. Most importantly, they engaged in belatedly pragmatic diplomacy to acquire support from powerful naval allies, which finally materialized in 388 in the shape of twenty ships from Syracuse and forty from Persia's Anatolian satraps, won over by Sparta's willingness to accept the King's Peace (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.28). The rebuilding of a navy based on allied ship contributions and Persian support allowed Sparta to regain control of the Hellespont, force Athens to the peace table, and reestablish a limited maritime supremacy, on the condition of strict respect for Persia's authority over the Ionian Greeks.

Sparta's reestablishment of alliance with Corinth in the wake of the King's Peace permitted it to rebuild a sizable Peloponnesian naval coalition for the Theban War of the 370s. It assembled 65 Peloponnesian triremes at the Battle of Naxos (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.61; Diod. 15.34.5, 35.2), 55 at Alyzeia (Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.65), and 60 in the invasion of Corcyra; in the last case, Xenophon specifies the fleet's inclusion of ships from Sparta, Corinth, Leukas, Ambrakia, Elis, Zakynthos, Achaia, Epidauros, Troizen, Hermione, and Halieis (Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.4). On all three occasions, the Peloponnesians proved unequal to the skills of the rejuvenated Athenian fleet, and the collapse of the Spartan alliance system after Leuktra dealt a final blow to its naval capabilities; although even at this late date, it is worth noting that the Spartans committed resources to the defense of the Gytheion shipyards, which held out for three days against Theban attack during Epameinondas' first invasion of the Peloponnese (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.32). But despite the final outcome, the renewed emphasis on naval collaboration suggests that Spartan leaders had digested some of the hard truths that eluded their predecessors in the giddy aftermath of Aigospotamoi. If "Sparta's naval comet... had a long tail," as Barry Strauss aptly remarks, this was only possible through the restoration of a maritime coalition that could disperse the construction logistics and costs of supporting a larger fleet.<sup>79</sup> Unilateral naval power was unsustainable without access to the local resources, international trade, and massive financial reserves available to their fifth-century Athenian predecessors or the recipients of Persian generosity.

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<sup>79</sup> Strauss 2009, 52.

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