Overview

- Simply called symmachia by ancients.
- Founded in 478 BCE in order to liberate the eastern Greek city-states from Persian rule.
- Led by Athens and aimed at defending against future Persian retribution/aggression.
- Made up of over 300 city-states.
- Athens became increasingly aggressive and demanded tribute in money, ships, or materials—creating the Athenian Empire.
- The league made some impressive accomplishments:
  - Ridding the Aegean of piracy.
  - Establishing standard measurements and a standard coinage.
  - Centralizing taxation.
  - Making accessible the judiciary of Athens.
  - Increasing inter-city trade.

From League to Empire

- Scholars disagree on when the 1st Athenian league changes into an empire, but there are two common dates:
  - c.454 BCE - League Treasury moved from Delos to Athens.
  - 446 BCE - Long Walls are constructed connecting Piraeus to Athens.
- Athens built the league and its empire from the pre-existing religious network centered on the cult of Apollo at Delos.
- Athens begins to lay the groundwork in the 6th c. when Peisistratus 'cleanses' part of the island in the 540s and builds a large monument (porinos naos) from Athenian limestone.
- Athens also began to claim itself as the mother-city of all Ionia (Solon)—propaganda which continues into the 5th century.
- Both Naxos and Samos attempted similar interventions in the Aegean, but neither of the three had the means to assert control over the region.
- Two interpretations of Athens’ moving of the league’s treasury:
  - Gomme argues that this marked a shift away from the former political narrative which placed Athens as the mother-city of Ionia
  - Constantakopoulou disagrees since Athens sustained that propaganda and was actually co-opting Delos’ former role as the center of the Aegean religious and cultural network.
- Athens takes over authority at the sanctuary on Delos, instituting the amphiktiones and forces another purification of the island, at one point even expelling the Delians themselves
- Triremes need a safe place to rest every 4 hours or so, which makes the Aegean ideal but, on the other hand, makes long voyages in regions with few islands nearly impossible (e.g. Crete)
Whoever controlled the sea, controlled the islands. Whoever controlled the islands could maintain their rule over the entire region.

According to the Tribute Lists, the island states only made up roughly 1/3 of the league.

Sources focus on the islands and intertwine them with conceptions of naval power:

**Herodotus**
- Links the islanders (nesiotes) with the idea of subject-allies as he relates the story of Themistocles during the Persian Wars
- He also describes the islands and the Hellespont as ‘prizes’ (aethla) for winning the battle of Mycale (9.101.3)

**Aristophanes**
- Demosthenes tells the sausage-seller to: “look at the islands all around.” κάτιδε τὰς νῆσους ἁπάσας ἐν κύκλῳ (170).
- There are also 2 lost comedies by Aristophanes and Plato which focus on Athenian sea-power and the islands.
- KA F24: Poseidon threatens the Spartans. “If, therefore, you readily give away this sea, or even if you don’t, I, brandishing my trident, will destroy all these things.”

**Thucydides**
- In Thucydides’ mind, Athens had a natural claim to all islands. For him, islands even become a substitute for subject-allies.
- Thucydides articulates through Cleon’s speech at 3.39.2, it is understandable for some cities to revolt against Athenian hegemony, but islands revolting is totally unacceptable.

**League Members**
- The largest number of members recorded on extant tribute tablets name 330 city-states
  - Tablets are known to be incomplete
  - Many of these cities are Ionian, but all regions of the Greek world seem to be represented
- Members were expected to pay tribute (phoros) to the treasury in order to fund the building and maintenance of ships for the fleet maintained by Athens.
- Revolts by Naxos and Thasos provide good examples of growing discontent in the latter periods of the Athenian Empire.
Overview

- After the Peloponnesian War, Sparta takes over the former Athenian Empire, enforcing its own hegemony over the Greek world.
- Sparta orders that:
  - Athenian walls and fortifications be destroyed
  - Athens let all former exiles return
  - The Athenian fleet be reduced to 12 ships
- Persia backs the Corinthian War (395-387 BCE) which essentially pitted Argos, Athens, Corinth, and Thebes against the Spartans.
- During this time, Konon used Persian subsidies to rebuild the Long Walls (394-391 BCE).
- Thrasybulus restrengthened relationships with the Hellespont in order to secure the grain trade for Athens.
- Corinthian War resolved by the ‘Peace of Antalcidas’ in 387 BCE (preserved by Xenophon):
  - Persia gets all Greek cities on Asia Minor and Cyprus
  - Athens gets Lemnos, Scyros, and Imbros
  - The rest should be autonomous
- Athens’ acquisition of these islands allowed it to begin rebuilding its naval power. It became the center of the grain trade for the Aegean (Burke).
- While the first league seems to be centered on imperialism and military control, the second league was focused on maritime commerce.

- The Piraeus served as the hub for this trade network and was thus the most important factor in establishing the second Athenian league.
- Growing tension between Thebes and Sparta prompted the Spartans to invade the Piraeus in the winter of 378 BCE.
  - Sources disagree on whether this was by the order of the Spartan king Cleombrotus or a Theban plot to bring Athens to their side.
  - Athens made alliances with several Aegean cities: Byzantium, Chios, Rhodes, and Mytilene.

The Decree of Aristoteles

- Decree passed in 378 BCE and inscribed on a stele placed in the Stoa of Zeus near the statue of Zeus Eleutherios.
- Formally launched the league, named members, and outlined the terms.
- Inscribed by 3 different hands and contains several areas that seem to have been erased or that do not survive.
- Primary source of evidence aside from Xenophon and Diodorus.
- Placed limits on Athenian power: e.g. Athenians were not allowed to own property in allied states.
- It also promised autonomy and no required tributes for members, which stood in stark opposition to the setup of the first Athenian League.
• League members were required to make a contribution (*suntaxis*), however, for the costs of the league's navy.
• Focused on defending members from the influences of Sparta and developing a trade network.
• Thebes joined only because defeating Sparta was a primary objective of the league in its initial stage.
• Some allies seceded from the league successfully while others were forcefully restored.

The End of the League
• The Social War begins c. 357 BCE when Chios, Rhodes, Cos, and Byzantium rebel against Athenian hegemony.
• Philip II captures Amphipolis (gold, silver, and timber) securing Macedonia's future.
• League dwindles afterwards and is eventually formally disbanded by Philip II in 338 BCE.
• Athens largely bankrupt after the Social War and in no place to enforce hegemony over members of the league or even the Aegean.

Bibliography

Monographs:

Articles, Chapters, & Theses: