CHAPTER SEVEN

THUCYDIDES

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At the start of his sixth book, Thucydides reports that the Athenians were planning to conquer Sicily, and then at once undermines their ambitions by stressing that 'most Athenians were ignorant of the extent of the island and the size of its population, both Greek and barbarian' (6.1.1). He follows this bold statement with an account of the island: 'To circumnavigate Sicily would take a merchant ship nearly eight days … Here follows an account of the original settlement of Sicily …' (6.1.2–2.1).[1] Thucydides' technique of offering an account of Sicily as the Athenians succumb to their ambition to conquer the island seems to recall (→) Herodotus' technique of describing foreign lands as they fall prey to Persian imperial designs.[2] Yet the account he offers (6.2–5, known as the *Sikelika*) differs from the Herodotean paradigm in important respects. Thucydides does bring out the size of the island by noting how long it takes to sail around it and also by a closing stress on its greatness (6.5.1). In between, he offers not a spatially oriented description of the island's inhabitants but a temporally oriented account of the stages of its colonization. And this account serves as a prelude to failure, not (as often in Herodotus) as a magnification of imperialist conquest.[3]

The *Sikelika* is often seen as exceptional within Thucydides' work as a whole: it was one of two sections that Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Pomp*. 3) cited as an illustration of how variety can prove refreshing within a narrative. Yet its superficially distinctive status seems to be lessened by its temporal rather than spatial orientation. It is often suggested that spatial description plays a relatively small role in Thucydides'

[1] Translations are (at times adapted) from M. Hammond 2009. I generally use 'Thucydides' as shorthand for 'the Thucydidean narrator'.

[2] Particularly close is Hdt. 1.201, where mention of Cyrus' (unfulfilled) desire to conquer the Massagetae is followed by a description of this tribe.

[3] Though Herodotus' account of Scythia (4.17–36, 46–82, 99–101) and of the royal road (5.52) are exceptions.

narrative, certainly by comparison with Herodotus.[4] A contrast is also often drawn between the two historians' treatment of physical landmarks. While Herodotus devotes lavish attention to the monuments of Egypt and Mesopotamia, Thucydides glances only in passing at the great buildings of Athens (1.10.2; 2.13.3–5). He is also sometimes thought to subscribe to a Periclean vision of space—an image of Athens as a self-sufficient utopian 'island' whose greatness transcends conventional spatial barriers.[5] One scholar has even concluded that 'the aim of Herodotus was to put the Persian Wars in their setting; the aim of Thucydides was to take the Peloponnesian War out of its setting'.[6]

Another section where Thucydides seems to give priority to time rather than space is the *Archaeology*, his opening sketch of Greece (1.2–19). The *Archaeology* is often seen as parallel to the *Sikelika*: just as the account of Sicily magnifies the island's greatness, so too the *Archaeology* helps to substantiate Thucydides' claim that the Peloponnesian War was 'the greatest disturbance to affect the Greek and a good part of the non-Greek world, one might even say the majority of mankind' (1.1.2). Despite that strongly spatial claim, the *Archaeology* itself takes the form of a linear account of the development of Greece; as in the *Sikelika*, there is a strong focus on population movements.

If we read both sections against the rest of his work, a much richer vision of Thucydides' treatment of space may emerge. Particularly important is the question of when spatial information is offered. The detailed account of Sicily could have been placed much earlier, when Thucydides describes how the Athenians intervene in the island during the earlier stages of the war. Equally, Thucydides does later (albeit indirectly) offer the sort of overt geographical sketch that he eschews at the start of book 6. His catalogue of the Syracusans' allies before the final battle in the harbour at Syracuse passes from east to west through the Greek cities on the (south) coast 'turned towards Libya', and then mentions Himera as the only Greek city on the (north) coast 'turned towards the Tyrrhenian sea' (7.58.1–2).

In this chapter I will start by outlining in more detail the techniques Thucydides uses to impart spatial information. After examining how previous scholars have explained these techniques in terms of Thucy-

[4] E.g. Funke and Haake 2006: 382.

[5] Cf. Crane 1996; contrast Taylor 2010 for a more anti-Periclean reading of Thucydides' view of 'the idea of Athens'.

[6] J.A.K. Thomson 1935: 43.

dides' use of earlier geographical writers and of the narratee's assumed knowledge, I will suggest that they can more powerfully be related to Thucydides' explanatory goals and his spatial definition of the war.

The Distribution of Spatial Information

Within his account of Sicilian colonization Thucydides offers geographical information only for the movements and locations of the non-Greek peoples: the Sicanians are still in the western parts of the island (6.2.2); the Sicels pushed the Sicanians to the southern and western parts and still inhabit the central and northern areas themselves (6.2.5). Except for one site (6.3.4) that was only briefly occupied, he offers no indication of where the various Greek cities whose foundation dates he mentions are located—as if basic knowledge of their location can be taken for granted. A similar element of presupposition operates at a more local level in the Sicilian narrative: as Dover notes, Thucydides 'writes at times as if both he and his readers were familiar with places and objects in the neighbourhood of Syracuse; this is notably true of his reference to the Olympieion, Daskon, the Anapos, and the Helorine Road in vi.64–66, Temenites in vi.75.1, and Euryelos, Labdalon, and the fig-tree … in vi.97–98'. And yet, as Dover also notes, Thucydides could also make 'the opposite assumption', notably in his 'elementary description' of Epipolae (6.96.1–2).[7] Here Thucydides reports the Syracusans' perception that if the Athenians failed to gain control of Epipolae—'a steep area lying directly above the city'—they would find it hard to wall off Syracuse; and then explains that 'the rest of the area has steep edges and slopes right down to the city, and all of it is visible from inside the city: the Syracusans call it Epipolae ("the Heights") because it forms a plateau above the surrounding terrain'.

To understand Thucydides' technique better, it will be helpful to review briefly the way he offers geographical information about places in his narrative as a whole. As we shall see, such information can be introduced directly by characters in speeches, and is often focalized by characters: in the case of Epipolae, its strategic importance is first perceived by the Syracusans ('a steep area …') and then confirmed by the narrator

[7] Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1945–1981: IV 467; though, as Hornblower 1991–2008: III 523 notes there is also an element of delay: Epipolae had been mentioned without any details at 6.75.1.

(the explanation 'for the rest of the area …' uses indicative forms); the subsequent account of how the Athenians seize the site implies that they too are aware of its importance. In this section, however, our focus will be on the narrator's explicit provision of information.

As in the Sicilian narrative, many places are mentioned without further spatial orientation. Thucydides' narrative generally remains intelligible, however, even when spatial details cannot be precisely placed cartographically. To cite one controversial example: in the Potidaea narrative, Thucydides writes that the Athenians left Macedonia and 'came to Beroea. From there they went on to Strepsa, and … proceeded by land to Potidaea. In short marches they reached Gigonus on the third day' (1.61.4–5). To understand this section, direct knowledge of the locations of the relatively unfamiliar Beroea, Strepsa, and Gigonus is not required: the narrative relies on the presupposition that they lie between the more familiar Macedonia and Potidaea. The controversy in this passage derives from the fact that mention of Strepsa derives from a clever nineteenth-century emendation (*epi Strepsan*): the manuscript reading *epistrepsantes* ('turning round') spoils the topographic coherence.[8]

Thucydides' spatial information tends to be quite short, often no more than one or two adjectives relating to a place's shape, appearance, or strategic value.[9] Some battlefields are delineated through the troops positioned on them rather than through any particular properties of their own.[10] Where hoplites are involved, features that upset the progress of the soldiers across the plain or introduce an element of surprise merit mention (at Delium, for instance, water courses prevent the extremes on each side from engaging, 4.96.2, and then Pagondas sends the Boeotian cavalry around a hill unseen, taking the Athenians by surprise,

[8] Cf. Hornblower 1991–2008: ad loc.

[9] Epithets applied to places include: *alimenos* ('harbourless'); *apedos* ('flat'); *aphanēs* ('out of sight'); *dasus* ('thick'); *dusprosodos* ('inaccessible'); *helōdēs* ('marshy'); *epithalassios* ('seaside'); *epikairos* ('suitable'); *epitēdeios* ('suitable'); *erēmos* ('deserted'); *erumnos* ('strong'); *isthmōdēs* ('isthmus-shaped'); *karteros* ('strong'); *koilos* ('hollow'); *lokhmōdēs* ('bushy'); *mēnoeidēs* ('crescent-shaped'); *petrōdēs* ('rocky'); *prosantēs* ('steep'); *stenos* ('narrow'); *hupsēlos* ('high'); *khalepos* ('difficult'); *kheimerinos* ('stormy').

[10] E.g. at 6.67 (first big battle at Syracuse), dispositions on the right, centre, and left are described, together with the depths of the line; the account of the ensuing battle (6.69–70) is spatially bare (except that Syracusan cavalry prevent the Athenians from pursuing far in victory and the Syracusans gather at the Helorine Road after their retreat). The euphemism *euōnumos* is used for 'left' only of human units.

96.5); particularly striking is the close attention given to spaces where hoplites are battling light-armed troops in difficult terrain (e.g. 3.97–98; 4.34). When action takes place within cities, there is a progression from the spatial indeterminacy typical of speech-scenes[11] to the greater detail in descriptions of foreign invasions and (above all) scenes of slaughter in civil war.[12] Even in the more detailed descriptions, the spaces that appear tend to be atomised (or at most defined in relation to one other site)[13] rather than integrated in a coherent civic topography.

When Thucydides does provide explicit orientation about places, his most common technique is to introduce them by their name and then to give some detail about their location within a larger geographical region. The narrative proper starts with a famous example: 'Epidamnus is a city on the right as one sails into the Ionian Gulf' (1.24.1). More often, spatial information is integrated in the narrative in relation to characters' actions: a particular place may be located as it initiates action (e.g. 4.123.1: 'Mende defected from them, a city on Pallene and an Eretrian colony')[14] or is traversed or attacked (e.g. 3.51.1: 'the Athenians sent an expedition against Minoa, the island which lies in front of Megara'). Thucydides uses a range of techniques to locate places within a wider region: a genitive (e.g. 3.93.1: *Kēnaion tēs Euboias*, 'Cenaeum belonging to Euboea'); an adjective (e.g. 3.31.1: *Kumēn tēn Aiolida*, 'Aeolian Cyme') or prepositional phrase introduced by the definite article (e.g. 3.92.1: 'Heraclea the colony in Trachis'); a participle clause (e.g. 4.57.1: 'the upper city, about ten stades from (*apekhousan*) the sea'); a relative clause

[11] The main exception is found in the quasi-ethnographic frame to the *Epitaphios* (2.34.5: 'the public cemetery, situated in the most beautiful suburb of the city'); note also the localization of assemblies (with no speeches recorded) during the coup at Athens in 411 (8.67.2: 'at Colonus [it is a sanctuary of Poseidon outside the city, about ten stades away]'; then back to the site 'known as the Pnyx, the traditional place for assemblies' at 8.97.1).

[12] For the first category, see e.g. the fighting at Plataea (2.1–6; 3.20–24), Torone (esp. 4.110.2, 111.2, 113.2), and Mycalessus (7.29–30); for the second, the scenes at Corcyra (esp. 4.48); cf. also the Herodotean richness of sacred space in the Pausanias excursus (1.133–134; cf. Crane 1996: 187–189).

[13] E.g. 6.75.1 ('a wall which … extended along the whole of the region which faces Epipolae') or 2.15.3 ('an area below it turned broadly to the south'), or to define broader areas, 2.55.1 (the Peloponnesians ravage 'the part of the territory facing the Peloponnese, then the area turned towards Euboea and Andros').

[14] Or 'away-household', as C.P. Jones 1999: 12 glosses the Greek word *apoikia* to bring out its spatial element.

(e.g. 2.80.1: 'the river Anapus, which is eighty stades from Stratus'); or an appositional noun phrase (e.g. 1.30.1: 'Leucimme, a promontory of Corcyra').[15]

Spatial information is also sometimes introduced in the form of the 'there is a place X' motif, as in (→) Homer or (→) Herodotus. In the opening Corcyra narrative, for instance, a Corinthian fleet gathers wrecks 'to Sybota …; Sybota is an uninhabited harbour in Thesprotia' (1.50.3). These independent units are occasionally expanded into longer geographical descriptions. A good example is found slightly earlier in the Corcyra narrative, when the Corinthian fleet reaches 'the mainland opposite Corcyra, anchoring at Cheimerium in Thesprotia' (1.46.4):

> There is a harbour, and a city lies above it, some way from the sea, in the Elaean district of Thesprotia, Ephyre. Near Ephyre the Acherusian lake discharges into the sea; the river Acheron from which it takes its name flows through Thesprotia and feeds this lake. The river Thyamis also flows here, forming the border between Thesprotia and Cestrine; between these rivers the promontory of Cheimerium juts out.

The present tense is generally used both in these independent passages and in geographical relative clauses: it marks the information as true independently of the immediate narrative context. Occasionally, however, the temporal perspective of the characters is maintained by use of the imperfect: there is a notable proliferation of such forms in the narrative of the Athenians' retreat from Syracuse, one of the most vivid sections of the work.[16]

These relatively small-scale descriptions nonetheless provide a broader spatial orientation. In particular, they define the Greek mainland and the Aegean as central. Thus the location of Epidamnus (1.24.1: 'on the right as one sails into the Ionian Gulf') is focalized by a voyager sailing away from the Mediterranean basin (it is not 'a city on the left as one sails out of the Ionian gulf').[17] The same directionality informs

[15] Sieveking 1964 offers a lengthy analysis of these techniques, with detailed lists and much excellent narratological comment.

[16] Imperfects: 7.78.5 bis (including *ekaleito* for a place-name), 79.1, 84.4; see also 3.97.2; 4.43.3; 6.62.3; of distances: 2.13.7; 4.66.3, 67.1; at 4.31.2 the fort described is temporary.

[17] Thucydides' definition of places as 'on the right' or 'on the left' is always in relation to moving groups (or, in this case, a generalized voyager, an instance of the 'anonymous witness' device), with the exception of 2.100.4—but even there 'Macedonia to the left of Pella and Cyrrhus' is 'from the viewpoint of an invader proceeding southwards' (Rhodes 1998: 267), i.e. towards the Mediterranean.

Thucydides' definition of a Thracian region 'as one has crossed (*huperbanti*) Mt Haemus' (2.96.1); his description (itself matched in Athenian administrative documents) of the Chalcidice peninsula and the Greek cities along the coast further east as 'Thraceward';[18] and his account of how the plague originated in Ethiopia 'above' (*huper*) Egypt (2.48.1). It is also used when it runs counter to characters' own perceptions: Thucydides writes of Cyrus invading the area 'within the river Halys towards the sea' (1.16), though for the Persians this invasion involves moving across the Halys; or again of 'the narrow pass into Arrhabaeus' territory' (4.127.2) when Brasidas is withdrawing from that territory. This perspective is embedded not just in static spatial descriptions, but also in accounts of movements: thus the plague went 'down' to Egypt (2.48.1), crossed to the Piraeus, and moved to the 'upper city' (2.48.2).[19]

As for the sort of large-scale regional description that Thucydides provides (at least in part) for Sicily, the other such passage that Dionysius of Halicarnassus specified is the account of Sitalces' kingdom in Thrace (2.96–98.1). Thucydides himself connects these two sections by the way he ends them: 'so great (*tosēnde*) was the island on which the Athenians had become eager to make war' (6.6.1); 'so great (*tosautēs*) then was the territory over which Sitalces was king' (2.98.1). The two accounts differ, however, in both motivation and form: while the account of Sicily is a closely defined unit that highlights the Athenians' ignorance of the land they are attacking, the account of Sitacles' kingdom opens more loosely and is placed in a context where Sitalces himself is the aggressor. Thucydides first offers geographical description indirectly as he recounts how Sitacles gathers his army:

> Beginning with the Odrysians Sitalces first made a levy of all the Thracians he ruled between Mounts Haemus and Rhodope and extending to the sea in the direction of the Black Sea and the Hellespont, then of the Getae as one has crossed Mt Haemus and the other regions inside the Danube towards the Black Sea … He also called into service many of the mountain Thracians … He made a levy also of the Agrianians and the Laeaens and all the other Paeonian tribes within his rule at its furthest reach.
>
> (2.96.1–3)

[18] Thirty-six instances altogether: the phrase has connotations of 'on the way towards that region of splendid resources'; it is used in Athenian tribute inscriptions—as is *apo Thraikēs*, also used by Thucydides for envoys from the Chalcidice (5.38.1, 4) and for the Brasidean troops (5.34.1, 35.6, 67.1). Is *epi Thraikēs* in a Corinthian speech (1.68.4) an imposition of Athenian spatial categories?

[19] Many further examples can be gleaned from Bétant 1843–1847 s.vv. *anō*, *anōthen*, *entos*, *katō*.

The spatial information imparted in the account of Sitalces' levy prepares for a more detailed sketch in which the extent of Sitalces' rule is defined first in terms of tribes, then in terms of travelling distances by foot and sea along the coast from Abdera to the mouth of the Danube, and by foot inland from Byzantium to the Strymon (2.96.3–97.2).[20]

Thucydides also offers a detailed geographical sketch of one of the objects of Sitalces' expedition, Macedonia. After describing Sitacles' route to Macedonia, he notes that his army gathered at Drobescus and prepared to invade 'lower Macedonia, which Perdiccas ruled' (2.99.1)—for 'there is also an upper Macedonia, comprising among other peoples the Lyncestians and the Elimiotians' (2.99.2), by contrast with 'what is now coastal Macedonia' (2.99.3). Following the Herodotean technique of describing lands as they are attacked, Thucydides then describes 'lower Macedonia'. He recounts how Perdiccas' ancestors (originally from Argos) won the land

> by forcibly evicting the Pierians from Pieria (they later settled in Phagres and other places across the Strymon below Mt Pangaeum—the coastal area below Pangaeum is still called the Pierian Gulf), and likewise the Bottiaeans (now neighbours of the Chalcidians) from Bottia. They also acquired a narrow strip of Paeonia running down along the river Axius to Pella and the sea … and took control of the land on the other side of the Axius as far as the Strymon, which is called Mygdonia … The whole of this area is now called Macedonia … (2.99.3–6)

Just as Sitalces' sequence of levies introduces a panoramic account of his kingdom, so here the sequence of population expulsions introduces a panoramic account of Macedonia. Thucydides' technique recalls the *Archaeology* and the *Sikelika*, which similarly delineate space through a description of population movements.[21]

Thucydides often fleshes out his bare spatial description of places and regions with further information that bolsters his spatial mapping. This information can seem incidental. It can relate, for instance, to a famous

[20] Note that Thucydides is concerned exclusively with the outer limits of Sitalces' kingdom: unlike (→) Herodotus and Polybius, he does not attempt to define the shape of regions or cities by recourse to analogies, except for the comment on Zancle as 'like a reaping-hook' (6.4.5), introduced to explain its name (and cf. 4.102.3 on rivers flowing round Amphipolis, again explaining the name; note also some comments on the shape of land where this has strategic significance—e.g. 'crescent-shaped' at 7.34.2).

[21] The same verb, *anistanai*, is used for Sitalces' levy in the present (2.96.1, 3) and for expulsions in the past in the accounts of Macedonia (2.99.3, 5), the *Archaeology* (1.8.2, 12.3, 4), and the *Sikelika* (6.2.2, 4.2 bis, 4).

feature (e.g. 'Actium in the territory of Anactorium, where the temple of Apollo is', 1.29.3; cf. 3.94.2; 7.26.2 for other temples of Apollo; 'Laureium, where the Athenians' silver mines are', 2.55.1), or even a feature created as a result of the action being described (trophies at 4.67.5; 5.10.6). More commonly, it concerns a place's historical or mythological associations, in particular its colonial status; the fact that this type of information tends to be found when Thucydides introduces places in remote locations forms part of his construction of space.[22]

A similar type of spatial structuring is provided by ethnographic detail about peoples at the margins of the Greek world. Discussing the resources of Sitalces' kingdom, for instance, Thucydides offers an exposition of the Thracian habit of receiving gifts, explicitly constructed as the opposite of Persian royal gift-giving (2.97.4); he also adopts a Herodotean temporal fluidity in this section as he looks ahead to the value of Thrace's tribute in the time of Sitalces' successor (2.97.3; cf. the prolepsis on Macedonia at 2.100.2). Greater narratological complexity is found in a passage where Thucydides reports how the Messenians persuade Demosthenes to invade Aetolia. The Aetolians are first described as 'a large and warlike tribe' living 'in unfortified villages widely separate from one another' (3.94.4). This description appears in the Messenians' indirect speech, but it echoes the narratorial analysis in the *Archaeology* of settlement patterns in early Greece (1.5.1)—where Aetolia is also listed among the remote regions of the Northwest where old customs that were once universal still survive (1.5.3). The narrator then offers the information that one Aetolian tribe is 'said to eat raw flesh' (3.94.5)—a typical marker of savagery. Here the spatial definition suggested by the inclusion of ethnographical material is reinforced by the cognitive uncertainty ('said to …').[23]

Thucydides does not adopt the same stylistic register for all the fringes of the Greek world. Athenian raids in Caria, Lycia, and the Black Sea (2.69.2; 3.19.2; 4.75.2) are treated briefly, without strong spatial definition. Above all, Thucydides is sparing in recounting interactions with Persia. He highlights from the start the potential importance of Persia, but only via allusions to embassies sent to or from the king (2.7.1, 67.1; 4.50.1). In keeping with the common Greek practice of describing the

[22] Cf. *SAGN* 2: 140–141.

[23] Cf. Rood 2006b: 244 for the use of *legetai* and *legontai* in passages dealing with distant places and times.

routes of journeys in terms of people rather than places, his account of the embassies focuses on the person of the king rather than on the specific location of the king at any given moment.[24]

We have seen, then, that Thucydides' narrator introduces spatial information in a wide variety of direct and indirect ways. It is time now to try to understand why this information takes the forms it does.

The (Traditional) Geographical Style

Like (→) Herodotus, Thucydides adopts the modes of description commonly found in geographical writers such as Hecataeus. This fact has led some scholars to assume that he directly used earlier writers: use of Hecataeus has been seen, for instance, in his adoption of the 'point of view of a coasting voyager' in his account of Epidamnus as 'a city on the right as one sails into the Ionian Gulf' (1.24.1).[25] But the problem with this suggestion is that Hecataeus described the coastal route around the Mediterranean the other way round (clockwise, not anticlockwise),[26] and also that he moves along the coast from place to place, often using the phrase *meta de* ('and after') or the middle form *ekhomai* ('next is/are …') to introduce successive places or peoples. Thucydides uses a phrase appropriate for describing a place in isolation, without regard for neighbouring places.

Scholars have also argued that it was when Thucydides did not have personal knowledge of the terrain he was describing that he borrowed information from earlier geographical writers. With regard to 1.46.4 (quoted above), for instance, Pearson found it easy to believe that 'Thucydides looked up some Periegesis (perhaps even Hecataeus') to find something about Cheimerium, about which he knew nothing, and copied

[24] For 'to the king', cf. also 1.137.1 (as well as e.g. Ar. *Ach*. 65; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: no. 21 l. 3); Thucydides does not mention Susa or Ecbatana (evoked at Ar. *Ach*. 64, 613) by name. The same pattern is found even in book 8, when the Persian satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus become prominent in the narrative: though Thucydides does mention the satrapal capitals Sardis and Dascylium once each in excursuses on the past (1.115.4, 129.1), he never locates these contemporary figures there. For descriptions in terms of peoples in Greek context, cf. e.g. 2.23.3 (*dia Boiōtōn*—the same phrase in Meiggs and Lewis [1969] 1988: no. 51 l. 6, an inscriptional narrative); 3.95.1; 5.4.6; 6.62.7.

[25] N.G.L. Hammond 1967: 448, following Pearson 1939: 51, and also citing Strabo 7.5.8, 8 as evidence for a shared source.

[26] As Sieveking 1964: 121 notes.

down the description word for word'.[27] His assumption seems to be that the more apparently irrelevant and traditional the description, the greater the likelihood that Thucydides copied from a source. In most cases, however, the fact that we have to rely on scattered citations from, say, Stephanus of Byzantium for our knowledge of Hecataeus and other early geographers means that we cannot say how closely Thucydides followed them.

Use of earlier historical writers has also sometimes been assumed. The influence of Antiochus of Syracuse (who wrote a history of Sicily down to 424 BC) has been detected in Thucydides' description of 'the islands called the Islands of Aiolos' (3.88.1):[28]

> These islands are cultivated by the Liparaeans, who are colonists from Cnidus. They live in one small island in the group, and it is called Lipara; they travel from there to farm the other islands, Didyme, Strongyle, and Hiera. The people there think that Hephaestus has his forge on Hiera, as it can be seen emitting copious fire at night and smoke by day. These islands lie opposite the territory of the Sicels and Messenians. (3.88.2–3)

This passage has many elements in common with the description of these islands in Pausanias (10.11.3–4)—where Antiochus is mentioned. The attribution to Antiochus seems particularly tempting because Thucydides' account of Sicilian colonization is also commonly thought (partly owing to some stylistic peculiarities) to derive from Antiochus.[29] But the problem with assuming too close a use of Antiochus at 3.88 is that Pausanias specifically cites Antiochus only for details that are not in Thucydides (the name of the colonizer, the expulsion of the original inhabitants). Pausanias himself may have used Thucydides and cited Antiochus precisely for those details he did not find in the more famous author.[30]

The main problem in basing arguments about sources on stylistic criteria is that such arguments present Thucydides passively adopting the language of his supposed sources. It is more plausible to assume that Thucydides consciously adopted different mannerisms in his longer geographical sections.[31] When he describes a mountain as 'large and uninhabited, next to (*ekhomenon*) Rhodope' (2.96.4), the form he uses (the

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[27] Pearson 1939: 52.

[28] Compernolle 1960: 473–479.

[29] See esp. Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1945–1981: IV 198–210.

[30] Cf. Jacoby 1923–1958: IIIb 490–491 (commentary on *FGrH* 555 F 1), suggesting that Thucydides could equally have used Hecataeus; Bosworth 1992: 47 n. 5.

[31] Cf. Hornblower 1991–2008: I 372, III 280.

middle of *ekhō* in the spatial sense of 'next to') is rare in his work but common in (→) Herodotus and geographical writers.[32] The geographical style is further recalled by the use of the generalizing dative participle introducing an 'anonymous witness' (2.96.1: 'as one has crossed (*huperbanti*) the Haemus').[33] And (→) Herodotus in particular is brought to mind by Thucydides' measurement of space by the time taken by 'a man travelling light' (*anēr euzōnos*, 2.97.1, 2). These Herodotean mannerisms are themselves part of Thucydides' structuring of space, casting Thrace as a remote region.

Thucydides' treatment of Sitalces' kingdom suggests that source-based approaches must also ask why he adopted the traditional geographical style *when* he did. One answer was provided by Gomme: he argued that the 'careful description' of Cheimerium (cited above) suggested 'autopsy or information from a special source' and that 'it is more likely that irrelevant information is a result of his own research'.[34] Another approach is to think in terms not so much of Thucydides' own knowledge, but rather of his conception of his narratee. An analysis of the regional distribution of Thucydides' geographical notes has identified 'two main areas where Thucydides thinks his audience may need assistance in following the narrative'—'western Greece, from Zakynthos to Epidauros [read 'Epidamnos'?] and in as far as the mouth of the Corinthian gulf' and 'the Chalkidike and Thracian coast'.[35] But while this approach in terms of the narratee is valuable, it is still the case that Thucydides' provision of spatial information is too inconsistent to be entirely explained through the model of the narratee. And this approach also fails to take account of a number of narratological complexities. A simple model of the narratee cannot explain why Thucydides repeats information that has already

[32] The middle is found at 5.67.2; 8.90.5; and in a temporal sense at 6.3.2 (where Antiochan influence has been suspected). Another distinctive feature of the longer geographical passages is orientation by cardinal points: restricted to the *Sikelika* are *mesēmbrinos* ('southern', 6.2.5), *hespera* ('evening') in the sense of 'the west' (6.2.2) and the cognate adjective *hesperios* ('western', 6.2.5); the north wind is used only twice purely for orientation apart from the *Sikelika* (6.2.5) and the Thrace/Macedonia section (2.96.4, 101.3); the south wind is used only once (3.6) apart from in that section (2.101.2) and the geographical excursus on early Athens (2.15.3); the sinking and setting sun are found in a catalogue (2.9.4) and again in the Thrace section (2.96.4).

[33] The same participle is found at Hdt. 4.25.1; exactly the same phrase is found in Hecataeus (*FGrH* 1 F 169).

[34] Gomme, Andrewes, and Dover 1945–1981: I 179.

[35] Ridley 1981: 41 (also 44: 'areas with which the continental Greek … would be least familiar').

been given, such as the location of Thyreatis on the borders of Argos and Laconia.[36] Like (→) Homer, Thucydides also sometimes includes spatial information not when a place is first mentioned, but at a later point: Crommyon, for instance, appears twice (4.42.4, 44.4) before its location ('in Corinthian territory') and its distance from the city of Corinth are given (4.45.1)—information which provides a formal frame to a new area of Athenian action.[37] Above all, Thucydides' descriptions of space are not just offered in response to lack of knowledge: they are related too to his explanatory aims.

Space and Explanation

Explanation of why characters act is often implicitly encoded in what appear to be purely spatial descriptions. When Thucydides begins the war narrative proper by recounting how 300 Thebans 'entered Plataea, a city in Boeotia allied to Athens' (2.2.1), it is unlikely that he imagined readers unfamiliar with its location: the very name of the city evokes a great Greek victory over the Persians, and in due course there are allusions to that past in speeches (notably by the Plataeans pleading for their life), and a further hint in the mention of 'the hero-shrine of Androcrates' near Plataea (3.24.1), which is familiar from Herodotus' account of the battle of Plataea (9.25.3). Rather, the location of this famous city is offered because it explains why the Thebans (set on control over the whole of Boeotia) attacked it. Similarly when Thucydides describes how a Cretan from Gortyn persuaded the Athenians to sail against Cydonia as a favour to the people of Polichna, 'neighbours (*homorois*) of the Cydonians', his phrasing is again explanatory: he appeals to the traditional notion of rivalry between neighbours.[38] Again, when the Athenians are said to attack the Melians, 'islanders (*nēsiotas*) who refused to take Athenian orders or join their alliance' (3.91.2), the epithet evokes the idea of Athenian naval supremacy over islands. This imperialistic definition of islands is in turn picked up in the Melian dialogue (5.97, 99), and then twisted in the account of the Athenians' ignorance of 'the size of

[36] 2.27.2; 4.56.2, with Rood 1998a: 53. Cf. also Anactorium as 'at the mouth of the Ambracian Gulf' at 1.55.1 and 4.49.1, with Sieveking 1964: 168.

[37] Cf. Sieveking 1964: 140: 'keine "Orientation", sondern Bezeichnung einer neuen Schädigung korinthischen Gebietes'.

[38] For similar uses of *homoros*, cf. Sieveking 1964: 148–149.

the island' of Sicily (6.1.1): 'large as it is, it is separated from being mainland by about twenty stades of sea' (6.1.2). Sicily is an island that is almost not an island, and the term 'island' soon drops from the account of the Athenians' doomed expedition.[39]

Implicit spatial encoding can also be found in geographical descriptions even when their explanatory function is overt. A notable instance is found in Thucydides' account of Athens' first expedition to Sicily. When the Syracusans plan to gain control of Rhegium, Thucydides first reveals their thinking in embedded focalization: 'There is very little distance between the promontory of Rhegium in Italy and Messana in Sicily, and the Athenians would not now be able to lie off Rhegium and command the strait'. He then offers a fuller account of this stretch of sea:

> This strait is the sea between Rhegium and Messana, where Sicily comes closest to the mainland: it is what is called Charybdis, through which Odysseus is said to have sailed. Its dangerous reputation is understandable given that narrow gap and the currents caused by the influx of water from two great seas, the Tyrrhenian and the Sicilian. (4.24.5)

The account of the dangerous currents is evidently part of the Syracusans' strategic thinking: it explains why the Athenians would not be able to command the strait. Mention of those currents is also offered in explanation of how Charybdis came to be localized there. But this apparent explanation still leaves open the question of why this mythological register was needed at all.

A richer understanding of Thucydides' depiction of the Strait of Messina emerges if we look beyond the immediate context. The allusion to Charybdis can be integrated into a broader Odyssean geography of the west: starting with Corcyra (associated with the Homeric Scheria, 1.25.4; 3.70.2), this Odyssean mapping continues with 'the islands of Aeolus' (3.88.1); with the mention of the tradition that the Cyclopes and the Laestrygonians were the most ancient inhabitants of the island (6.2.1); and with the reference to 'Trinacria' as Sicily's earliest name (6.2.2, evoking the Odyssean 'Thrinacria'). These allusions create a sense of Sicily's spatial remoteness that is in turn variously reinforced by speakers (6.11.1, 13.1, 68.3, 86.3) and by the narrator's claim that the young 'longed for foreign travel and the sights abroad' (6.24.3). While the notion that it

[39] Cf. Constantakopoulou 2007: 14, 83–85, 92–99 (she also relates the use of island-terminology to the *nēsiotikon* district in the Athenian tribute lists); Rood 1998a, index s.v. 'islands'.

is dangerous to yearn for what is distant was traditional,[40] Thucydides' language picks up his earlier evocation of a mythical Sicily. He implies that it was the fascination exerted by stories that were localized in Sicily that made the Athenians desire to travel there themselves.[41] This mythical note vanishes in turn when the Athenians arrive in Sicily and find that the island's cities are all too like Athens (7.55.2).

This type of implicit spatial explanation of characters' actions is matched by passages where characters' spatial perceptions are made explicit through embedded focalization. Thus Thucydides explains that the Spartans founded Heraclea because it would be 'good' (*kalōs*) for the war, as it was 'only a short crossing' to Euboea and 'it would lie usefully on the route to Thrace' (3.92.4); he then gives slightly more detail about the crossing when the Athenians think it 'a specific threat to Euboea, as it is a short crossing from there to Cape Cenaeum in Euboea' (3.93.1). The Athenians' narrower focus on the threat to Euboea is a seed, looking ahead to Thucydides' analysis of the significance of Euboea when the island revolts (8.96.2); it illustrates at the same time their blindness to the possibility of a Peloponnesian march to the Thrace. Similar strategic comments help to explain why the Athenians agree to a defensive alliance with Corcyra (it 'lay nicely on the coastal route to Italy and Sicily', 1.44.3—picking up the Corcyraeans' own argument at 1.36.2 and also linking verbally with the Spartans' perception of the advantage of Heraclea); and also why they fortify Minoa (3.51.2: it is closer than Boudorum or Salamis for their watch on Megara).[42] Characters' understanding of space is also revealed in their deliberations about routes (e.g. 1.26.2, 107.3–4; 7.1.1): while the straight line of the itinerary is often seen as the most important mode in Greek conceptions of space, Thucydides also shows characters embedding perceptions of linear routes within a broader regional sense of space.

The importance of Thucydides' explanatory goals is brought out particularly strongly by the technique of piecemeal description, known from (→) Homer and (→) Herodotus (often with a subtle interaction between statements focalized by the narrator and by characters). There is space here only to focus on two important examples—Decelea and Pylos.

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[40] See Young 1968: 106–120 (with 120 n. 18 on Thucydides); Rood 1998a: 177 n. 68.

[41] Cf. Rood 1998b, where full bibliography can be found.

[42] Cf. also 4.1.2 (Syracusans seeing Messana as 'a gateway to Sicily'—and aware that the Athenians knew its potential; the phrase is then echoed by Alcibiades at 6.48); 4.53.2 (value of Cythera for attacks on Laconia), 75.1, 108.1; 5.53; 7.50.2; 8.55.1, 60.1, 90.4; also e.g. 1.68.4 from speeches and 1.7 and 6.2.6 from reconstructions of the past.

The important site of Decelea is first mentioned (as 'in Attica', 6.91.6) in Alcibiades' speech encouraging the Spartans to fortify the site. When the Spartans follow up on his advice, Thucydides describes more precisely its position in relation to Athens and Boeotia: 'Decelea is about 120 stades from the city of Athens, and roughly the same distance or a little more from Boeotia. The fort was built with a view to the devastation of the plain and the best tracts of land, and could be clearly seen from the city of Athens' (7.19.2: *epiphanes mekhri tēs … poleōs*); the description here echoes the earlier account of Epipolae (cf. *mekhri tēs poleōs … epiphanes* of Epipolae at 6.96.2).[43] Finally at 7.27–28 Thucydides offers a detailed account of the damage done to the Athenians by the occupation of Decelea, noting how they were forced to convey supplies by sea around Sunium rather than by land from Oropus, and noting too a shift in the symbolic role of Athens: it 'came to resemble a military outpost rather than a city' (7.28.1). Earlier, the emphasis given to Epipolae prepared for an important but temporary shift in the fortunes of the war; here, Thucydides brings out that the Spartans' hold on Decelea was enduring.

The technique of piecemeal description is used with greater complexity in the Pylos narrative. The advantages of the site are first highlighted in a speech by Demosthenes (4.3.2–3). Next, Thucydides reports that the Athenian soldiers fortified the 'most vulnerable points'—'for most of the site had sufficiently strong defences to have no need of a wall' (4.4.3); he later specifies that these were 'the part facing the mainland' (4.5.2). The adjacent island of Sphacteria then receives a long description when the Spartans send men across to it (4.8.6). Faced by a Spartan attack, the 'deserted' nature of the site, earlier seen by Demothenes as one of its advantages (4.3.2), now becomes counter-productive (there is nowhere for Demosthenes to procure weapons for his sailors 'in the deserted place', 4.9.1); later still, the roughness of the terrain on Sphacteria (4.33.2) turns out to the Athenians' advantage, as the Spartan hoplites trapped on the island are unable to offer pursuit. A similar shift of spatial value occurs with Thucydides' focus on the Athenians' camp on Pylos: as their stay becomes longer than expected, he brings out that there was only one spring (4.26.2) and that they were inconvenienced by the lack of space (4.26.3: *stenokhōria*). But this same shortage of space (*stenokhōria* is repeated at 4.30.2) proves advantageous when troops put in 'at the

[43] Cf. Hornblower 1991–2008: ad loc.

extremities of the island' to eat food and unwittingly cause a fire that deprives the Spartan hoplites of their tree cover.[44]

Superimposed on Thucydides' gradual disclosure of different aspects of the sites of Pylos and Sphacteria are a number of intra- and intertextual spatial associations. Demosthenes had initially been put off attacking the Spartans trapped on the island by recollection of the disaster he had suffered in Aetolia, where his men had become trapped in unfamiliar wooded areas (4.30.1, looking back to the spatially detailed narrative at 3.97–98). When the Athenians do attack and then find a path around, Thucydides introduces a spatial comparison with Thermopylae (4.36.3) that helps explain the Greek surprise at the Spartans' subsequent surrender (4.40.1). Spatial similarities explain characters' planning for the future and their interpretations of the past.

The spatial significance of Pylos and Sphacteria is itself developed further within Thucydides' work. For the Spartans, the reversal is underlined by Thucydides' repeated return to the fate of 'the men on the island' (with no need to explain which island is meant):[45] paradoxically the very lack of naming underscores how strongly events on Sphacteria have been inscribed in the Spartans' collective memory. For the Athenians, the spatial memory of Pylos changes as they begin to suffer in the confined spaces of Syracuse: the key term *stenokhōria* is now applied to the harbour (7.36.4 bis, 49.2, 70.6) and Epipolae (7.44.2). Finally, cut off after the loss of their ships, the Athenians are in the position of the men on the island after the loss of their ships (7.71.7).

The example of Pylos shows with particular clarity how variations in spatial detail relate to Thucydides' explanatory goals. The wealth of spatial detail and the symbolic power of the spatial terms are both related to the importance of the Pylos campaign as a great turning point in the war.

Total Space

In addition to offering local spatial details that help explain the course of the war, Thucydides also offers an insight into the transformations wrought in perceptions of space by the phenomenon of Athenian

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[44] Rood 1998a: 28.

[45] Cf. Constantakopoulou 2007: 14. Contrast 'from Pylos' in an Athenian inscription on a shield probably taken from the men on the island (*IG* I^3 522).

expansionism. It is above all in speeches that Athens' threat to traditional spatial conceptions is conveyed: 'In relations between neighbouring states mutually assured defence is always the condition of independence. With the Athenians, then, in particular, whose ambition is to enslave not just their neighbours but distant peoples too … we have to realize that … defeat for us will mean a single and undisputed border for the whole land' (4.92.4). The speaker here, the Boeotian Pagondas, is trying to goad the Boeotians into battle even though it is not clear that the Athenians are still in Boeotia. Even so, his account of the Athenians' redefinition of space does fit in with the type of transformation suggested earlier in the work in Athenian speeches—above all, in the Funeral Oration, where Pericles projected a positive vision of the Athenians as recipients of goods 'from all over the world' (2.38.2: *ek pasēs gēs*) and as themselves forcing 'every sea and every land' (*pasan … thalassan kai gēn*) to be open to their daring (2.41.4, cf. 63.2).[46]

Thucydides himself subscribes to the view that the Peloponnesian War is the climax to a process of spatial transformation within the Greek world. As we have seen, he defined the war's greatness partly in terms of its quasi-universal spatial extent (1.1.2); later in the *Archaeology* he drew the same contrast Pagondas makes with earlier wars marked by fighting against neighbours (1.15.2).[47] The qualitative difference of space shown in the spread of the Peloponnesian War to regions such as Thrace receives further support from the distinctive style Thucydides adopts in treating outlying areas. If his depiction of locations such as Thrace and Epidamnus operates as a sort of stylistic reflection of spatial distance, then his occasional Herodoteanisms are especially appropriate in challenging Herodotus' own claim of the greatness of Xerxes' invasion of Greece. The geographical expansion of the war is further shown by Athens' expedition to Sicily, which is marked as an island with settlers from both west (Iberians, 6.2.2) and east (Trojans, 6.2.3). The Peloponnesian War also brings together other distant cities that were settled during the great post-Trojan War diaspora (2.68.3; 4.120.1, cf. 1.12.1–2; 2.102.5–6 alludes to another foundation from the same era). The Greek world is united as never before by the disunity of the Peloponnesian War.

[46] Note also 2.43.3: 'famous men have the whole earth (*pasa gē*) as their tomb'.

[47] I discuss Thucydides' presentation of spatial changes over time in a forthcoming paper.

The cost of Athens' geographical reach is best shown by an intruder from the margins—the plague. The plague's move down from Ethiopia to the coast mirrors the way in which within the human body (subjected by Thucydides to a detailed generalizing description) 'the affliction moved down to the chest' (2.49.3: *katebainen*, cf. *katebē* at 2.48.1). It proves particularly pernicious with people living 'in huts which at that time of the year were stifling' while 'the dead and the dying were piled on top of each other' (2.52.1). The dense physicality of that spatial narrative returns at the climax of the Sicilian narrative with Thucydides' account of the massacre of Athenians at the river Assinarus: the troops fight for the chance to drink bloodied water, and corpses are piled on corpses (7.84.5–85.1). The survivors are then placed in the stone-quarries at Syracuse, 'a deep and narrow space' where they are exposed to 'direct sun and suffocating heat, with no shelter', where they have to do everything 'in the same place because of the confined space' (*stenokhōria* once more), and where corpses are once more piled on top of corpses (7.87.1–2). The pathetic detail of Thucydides' description of the suffering in Sicily reveals how much is lost in the totalizing perspective of Pericles' rhetoric of space.[48]

[48] For the echoes of the plague narrative at 7.84–85 and 7.87, cf. Connor 1984: 204 n. 51; Hornblower 1991–2008: III 743; note also that *pnigos* at 2.52.2 and *pnigēros* at 7.87.1 are the only two occurrences of this root ('stifling') in Thucydides.