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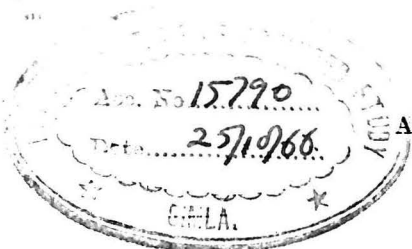
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ARTICLE No. 7.

Thucydides II. 13.

A Possible Explanation of Certain Difficulties.

By K. ZACHARIAH.

Thucydides has put into the mouth of Pericles a sketch of the financial position of Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, which runs thus:—‘Apart from other sources of income, an average revenue of 600 talents of silver was drawn from the tribute of the allies; and there were still 6,000 talents of coined silver in the Acropolis, out of 9,700 that had once been there, from which the money had been taken for the porch of the Acropolis, the other public buildings and for Potidæa. This did not include the uncoined gold and silver in public and private offerings, the sacred vessels for the processions and games, the Persian spoils and similar resources to the amount of 500 talents. To this he added the treasures of the other temples. These were by no means inconsiderable, and might fairly be used. Nay, if they were ever absolutely driven to it, they might even take the gold ornaments of Athena herself; for the statue contained 40 talents of pure gold and it was all removable. This might be used for self-preservation but all of it must be restored. Such was their financial position—surely a satisfactory one.’ Some¹ of these assertions are perplexing and on the basis of such information as we possess from other sources, chiefly inscriptions, have, in fact, proved impossible to confirm or justify.

The three main points in Thucydides’ account, with which we are concerned, are these: (1) in 431, there were 6,000 T of coined silver and 500 T of uncoined gold and silver in the Acropolis, besides the treasures of the other temples; (2) at one time, there had been 9,700 T in the Acropolis, but a large part of it had been spent on the Propylæa and other public buildings and for the operations round Potidæa; (3) the tribute from the allies brought in on the average 600 T a year.

The first of these statements does not present much difficulty; and it is confirmed generally by the epigraphic evidence. We have, fortunately, the accounts of the logistai containing the totals of the sums borrowed by the State from the temples during the years, 433/2—423/2.² Athena Polias, by far the largest creditor, lent over 4,001 T between 433/2 and 427/6 and

¹ Thuc. II. 13.

² Inscriptiones Graecæ (editio minor) = I. G². I, 324.

over 747 T between 426/5 and 423/2. The period, be it noted begins before 431 and the sums include the loans for the expeditions to Corcyra and the earlier operations against Potidæa; on the other hand, the period ends a year before the Peace of Nicias and the expenses of the last campaign in Thrace are not reckoned. Roughly, we may conclude that the State borrowed about 5,000 T from Athena Polias, that is, practically the whole of the available reserve, as 1,000 T had been set apart by decree for an extreme emergency.¹ Far the larger proportion of this amount was borrowed in the first four or five years of the war and the rapid exhaustion of the reserve is both the explanation and the justification for the imposition of the eisphora and for Cleon's drastic re-assessment of the tribute. Without these expedients, especially the latter, Athens would have been bankrupt long before 421. It is very unlikely that there was any balance to pay into the reserve during any year of the war and in 421 the treasury probably contained little more than the final reserve of 1,000 T. An inscription, however, records the existence of 3,000 T in 416/5.² Between 421 and 416, 2,000 T, more or less, were thus added to the reserve. This is not improbable, even though there was a considerable reduction of the tribute in the assessment of 421, as West has shown,³ and although there is evidence of small borrowings in 418/7 and 417/6.⁴

The statement of Thucydides about the presence of 6,000 T in the Acropolis in 431 may, therefore, be accepted.

The second assertion is, however, not so easily credible. As it stands, the passage implies that 3,700 T had been spent in the years immediately preceding—the Propylæa are mentioned as one of the items of expenditure, but the Parthenon is not mentioned, and we cannot believe that it is included among 'the other public buildings'; the siege of Potidæa is mentioned, but not the siege of Samos. The language of Thucydides suggests that the maximum of 9,700 T was reached about 435 or in the one or two years before or after. But we know that the operations round Potidæa cost altogether only 2,000 T,⁵ of which the greater part must have been spent after 431; and, while we have no accurate figures for the expenses of the Propylæa, such evidence as exists suggests a total of a few hundred rather than a few thousand talents.⁶ The assumption that 3,700 T was spent from the reserve (not taking into

¹ Thuc. II. 24.

² I. G². I. 99.

³ *Amer. Jour. Arch.*, 1925, pp. 135-151.

⁴ I. G². I. 302.

⁵ Thuc. II. 70.

⁶ The statement of Heliodorus that the Propylæa cost 2,012 T cannot be accepted in view of what we know of building costs. Beloch (*Tr. Gesch.* II, 2, 336) thinks it could not have cost more than 2-300 T. Cavaignac (*L'histoire financière d'Athènes au Ve siècle.* 102) suggests an expenditure of 400 T.

account the annual revenue at all) for the purpose which Thucydides mentions is inadmissible.

It is difficult to believe, then, that Athens had 9,700 T in the reserve about 435. Nor is it possible to discover any earlier date at which we can reasonably assume the existence of this large sum. No year will serve after the conclusion of the Samian War in 439, because the years following were surplus years, during which the Samian indemnity was being received in instalments and there must have been annual balances from the tribute of the empire. Generally speaking, the period between the transfer of the treasury to Athens and the Samian revolt was also a period of surplus budgets. The expenses of the not very protracted expeditions and of the Parthenon must have been far less than the 5-6,000 T which were paid in as tribute during these years. The reserve, therefore, probably reached its maximum in 441. But the maximum could scarcely have been as high as 9,700 T, unless we assume either the existence of several thousand talents at Delos at the time of the transfer of the treasury to Athens or the possession of great wealth by Athens herself derived from other sources—the probabilities are against either hypothesis.¹ On the other hand, if there were 9,700 T in 441, it is impossible to explain how the reserve dwindled down to 6,000 T in 431. The only extraordinary expenses of any magnitude during these ten years were the cost of the Samian siege, the expeditions to Corcyra and to Potidæa, and the buildings, the Parthenon partly and the Propylæa entirely. Against them we have to set the tribute, which by itself was probably sufficient to meet all these expenses, and several instalments of the Samian indemnity. The conclusion appears inevitable that there never were 9,700 T at one time in the reserve.

If this argument is valid, there are only two possible alternative explanations, one or the other of which historians have been obliged to accept. Either our text is corrupt or Thucydides fell into confusion. A summary of the views of three prominent writers on the subject will illustrate these alternatives.

Cavaignac suggests a theory of textual interpolation. He relies on one of the scholia on Aristophanes, which says that there always were 6,000 T of coined silver on the Acropolis, of which the greater part remained, about 300 T having been spent on the Propylæa and other buildings and for the siege of Potidæa; and he suggests that a copyist, who knew the

¹ The figures of Diodorus, 8,000 and 10,000 T, are worthless. Beloch (*Gr. Gesch.* II, 2, 329) thinks there were 3-3,500 T at the time of the transfer. Cavaignac (*Hist. Fin.* 69) suggests 3,000 T. Ed. Meyer (*For-schungen* II, 126) ascribes to Athena large revenues and a great hoard of her own; but Beloch's and Cavaignac's criticism of this theory seems sound.

tradition of 10,000 T, made a slight alteration so as to make the passage mean that there were still 6,000 T in the Acropolis, the maximum having been 10,000 T less 300 T, on which one had drawn for the Propylæa and other buildings and for the siege of Potidæa. Thus we have the figure of 9,700 T in our existing MSS. of Thucydides.¹ The figure, 10,000 T, was certainly current as an estimate of the resources of Athens at their highest; we have mention of it in a fragment of Isocrates as well as in Diodorus. Diodorus says that the treasure brought from Delos, gathered from the common contributions of the cities, amounted to 10,000 T; but 4,000 of them were spent in the building of the Propylæa or citadel and in the siege at Potidæa. 6,000 T remained, as in Thucydides.

This is a possible solution, but hardly probable. It relieves Thucydides of the responsibility of error with regard to the 9,700 T, an amount which, as I have tried to show, the treasury could not have possessed at any one time; but it does not touch the equally difficult problem of the 600 T of tribute. Nor is there any direct evidence for textual corruption. Our MSS. of Thucydides have no variant readings in this passage. And, as Beloch points out,² the corruption is more likely to be in the scholium than in the extant text of Thucydides.

Beloch concludes by the remark that here we have an instructive example of the result of the attempt to maintain the authority of Thucydides at all cost. His own opinion is that Thucydides made a mistake; he added to the sums in the treasury in 431 the whole cost of the siege of Potidæa (2,400 T) and the total expenses to the state of the buildings on the Acropolis (1,300 T).³

Ed. Meyer's explanation is, in some respects, similar. The 3,700 T, he argues, must have been spent mainly on the Propylæa and other buildings and only in small part on the expeditions. The reserve must therefore have reached its maximum before the commencement of the Propylæa in 437, that is, before the 3,000 T which are mentioned in the decree of Callias had been fully paid in. But, obviously, this cannot be right. What Thucydides did was to reckon this payment as already complete. He is assessing the financial resources Athens had at her disposal at the highest point of her power; it was irrelevant to his purpose that the whole sum was never together in the Acropolis and that by the time the last instalments of the 3,000 T had been received in 434 already considerable sums had been paid out again for expenses.⁴

¹ Cavaignac, *Hist. Fin.*, 107-111.

³ *Ibid.*, 342.

² *Gr. Gesch.*, II, 2, 341.

⁴ Meyer, *Forsch.*, II, 119.

It will be noticed that this argument rests on the assumption that the decree of Callias was passed in the year 434. On this decree hang many difficult problems of Athenian financial history with which I cannot now deal; it need only be said that the weight of opinion seems to be in favour of an early date like 434 for this decree rather than of a later date like 418, which is maintained by Beloch.¹

Let us turn now to the third statement of Thucydides, that the average annual income from the tribute was 600 T. If it is possible that the 9,700 T is the emendation of a copyist—and this is the more easily conceivable as the item is contained in a parenthesis—the same explanation will not cover the 600 T. That the statement existed in early Mss. of Thucydides is clear from Plutarch's quotation of it in his life of Aristides,² But that it caused perplexity is also clear from the fact that in the parallel and probably dependent passage in Diodorus the income from the tribute at the beginning of the war is estimated at 460 T, the traditional figure.³

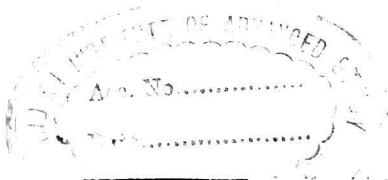
Fortunately, we have at this point the direct evidence of inscriptions to check Thucydides. Numerous fragments have been discovered of the stelae on which was inscribed, year by year, the amount of the tribute paid by the allies beginning with 454, or rather, of the aparche or sixtieth part of the tribute paid to Athena. Attempts have been made to reconstitute the lists, but the text in the first edition of the Corpus was imperfect and the calculations made on the basis of that text, notably by Pedrolì and Cavaignac, are therefore unreliable and generally much too high. The recent Editio Minor has a much more satisfactory text, which again has been greatly improved in the last four or five years by the thorough and scientific investigations of West and Meritt.⁴ Thanks to them, it is now possible to work out, within a comparatively small margin of error, the amount of the actual tribute for many years. But when we do this, we are at once struck by the extraordinary fact that in no year before the war does the actual tribute attain to the Aristidean norm of 460 T. In the first assessment period, 454/3-451/0, the difference is not great; but, thereafter, the total falls rapidly. Dr. Meritt has kindly informed me of some of his results, which agree closely with my own calculations. In 444/3 the amount collected was only 376 T and some drachmae. Between 443 and 439, it averages within a few talents of 395. In the re-assess-

¹ cf. Kolbe: *Das Kalliasdekret* (Sitz. Preuss. Akad., 1927, XXVIII).

² Plut. Arist., 24.

³ Diod., XII, 41.

⁴ *Harvard Studies in Class. Philol.* XXXVII, 55-98; XXXVIII, 21-73; *Amer. Jour. Philol.*, XLVII, 171-6; *Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc.*, LVI, 252-267; *Amer. Jour. Arch.*, XXX, 137-149; XXXI, 180-185, etc.



ment of 438 some increase was made, but there is no sign of any general or large increase in the next period, 434/3-431/0. The lists for 433/2 and 432/1 have, in large measure, been reconstituted,¹ and we can form a fairly accurate estimate of the income from the tribute during these years. The gaps are too large to ensure absolute accuracy; and it is possible that a more detailed and careful analysis than I have either skill or patience for may reach results a little different. But the margin of error is comparatively small. The tribute received in 433/2 was about 386 T; in 432/1 only about 348 T. These figures are far removed from Thucydides' 600 T.

Various explanations of this discrepancy have been suggested. Cavaignac asserts that the tribute was raised in the re-assessment of 439 and again in 435 and 431 and regards Thucydides' figure as 'a theoretic total.'² But, apart from the fact that the assessment was revised in 438 and 434 (not in 439 and 435),³ the lists as revised by West and Meritt show little trace of any general increase; and it is unlikely that even the theoretic total could have amounted to anything like 600 T. In fact, Cavaignac's estimates of the income from the tribute are always too high. Mr. Tod, while admitting that the quota lists show that the words of Thucydides cannot be taken literally, suggests that 'they may correctly summarise the external revenue of the state.'⁴ There were other sources of income like the obscure dekate or tenth alluded to in I. G². I, 91. Busolt long ago put forward the suggestion that the instalments of the Samian indemnity were included in the 600 T; but this is not probable as the indemnity was not a regular and permanent source of income. None of these explanations meets the real difficulty, which is that while Thucydides says that the allies paid 600 T of tribute annually we know that the actual receipts from the tribute did not amount to two-thirds of that sum.

Dr Meritt indicates two possibilities.⁵ We may have here an instance of haplography: *ἐξακοσίων* for *ἐξ [ἡκοντα καὶ τετρ]ακοσίων*. But this mistake, if it occurred, must have occurred before the time of Plutarch, who quotes Thucydides' 600 T. The other possibility is that when our authorities mention the amount of the tribute they include both ships and cash payments. On this view, the 460 T of the original Aristidean assessment and the 600 T of Thucydides represent the expenses of the ships contributed by the non-tributary allies as well

¹ I. G². I, 212, 213. *Harvard Stud. Class. Philol.*, XXXVIII, plates 11 and 12.

² Cavaignac, *Hist. Fin.*, 111.

³ Meritt in *Amer. Jour. Arch.*, XXIX, 292-8; West and Meritt, *ib.*, 434-439.

⁴ *Camb. Anc. Hist.*, V, 28-9.

⁵ In a letter.

as the money contributions of the tributary allies. This would solve the serious difficulty that thirty years after the original assessment, when many new cities had been enrolled in the empire and many autonomous allies had been reduced to the status of tributary subjects, the actual tribute received was considerably less than 460 T. But in 431 only Chios and the cities of Lesbos supplied ships; the money assessment had not been greatly increased; and it is difficult to see how the total could have reached 600 T. Even wealthy states like Thasos and Aegina only paid 30 T; and it is improbable that Chios and Lesbos between them contributed ships equal to 200 T. The language of our literary authorities, again, indicates that the assessment was a cash assessment. We can scarcely assume that the 600 T included ships as well.

Another explanation is possible, which, as far as I am aware, has not yet been suggested. The *quota* list contains the names of such cities only as paid tribute in any particular year; but a city might be a defaulter or be excused for one reason or another; and the lists therefore are not identical even within one assessment period. But the assessment list had a wider scope. It is true that no *assessment* lists previous to 425 have come down to us. But they included the names of all cities which regularly paid tribute; and it is probable that they contained the names of all states which had ever belonged to the empire, even though they had long ceased to pay tribute, and perhaps the names of some which had never belonged to the empire at all. Athenian policy in this respect was like that of the Great King,¹ it was most reluctant to recognise defections. The Lycian and many of the Carian towns had long since seceded,² but in the early years of the Peloponnesian War Athens sent expeditions to collect tribute from them.³ Cleon's assessment list of 425 was, to judge from the surviving fragments, a document which included the names of tributaries old, present and prospective.⁴ The earlier lists probably shared the same character, if in smaller measure. It follows that the assessment total must have been considerably larger than the actual total. It is possible that Pericles had the former in mind and it may have reached 600 T. But my calculations on this basis do not yield a total of more than 500 T.

To summarise: none of the suggested explanations of these two statements of Thucydides is really satisfactory. The chance of an interpolation or corruption of the text is slight. The alternative possibility is that Thucydides made a mistake.

¹ Thuc. VIII. 5.

² The Lycian towns appear only in the list of 446-5, I.G.². I, 199. After 440, many of the Carian towns fell away and in 438 that district was amalgamated with Ionia.

³ Thuc. II. 69, III. 19.

⁴ I.G.². I, 63.

Historians of repute have been obliged to accept that alternative; and I shall proceed on the same assumption.

If Thucydides made a mistake, can we explain how he came to make it? I suggest that it is the result of a misreading of the inscriptions I. G², I, 91/92, which were inscribed on the two sides of the same stone. One of these is the decree of Callias, already referred to.

In these decrees, for which (as has been said) the generally accepted date is 434, there are two statements which are relevant to our purpose. The completion of a payment of 3,000 T to Athena is mentioned and 200 T are set apart for repayment of the debts to the other gods. It is also decreed that 10 T a year should be spent on the buildings of the Acropolis till the work is finished.

The inscriptions which contain the building accounts of the Propylæa clearly state that the Hellenotamiai contributed a mina per talent, that is, a sixtieth of the annual tribute; the actual figures have unfortunately perished.¹ The same rule probably applied to the Parthenon; and we know that in 444/3 the Hellenotamiai contributed to its expenses a sum amounting in all probability to 37,675 dr. 5 ob.² The tribute for the year must, therefore, have been just over 376 T, which agrees with the result of calculations based on the quota list. This, then, was the regular practice. In I. G², I, 92, a definite sum of 10 T was set apart for the buildings. Instead of the exact sixtieth, a round sum is assigned. It was very natural for Thucydides to assume that the 10 T represented a sixtieth of the average tribute. The deduction that the tribute averaged 600 T was wrong, at any rate of the actual receipts, but it is intelligible.

Again, at the outbreak of the war, we are told that in the Acropolis there were 6,000 T of coined silver in the reserve and 500 T of bullion. But, shortly before, 3,000 T had been paid to Athena by the state and 200 T to the other gods. If we add all these amounts, together we reach the precise total of 9,700 T, which is said to have been the maximum amount of the reserve. It is generally held that Athena and the other gods were the bankers of the state and that the state had no reserve apart from the treasure of Athena herself. But Thucydides, estimating the maximum resources of the state, added the 3,200 T to the 6,500. If we knew more about the Athenian system of finance this might prove more intelligible than it now appears.

Thus we have a complete and natural explanation of the two mistakes (if they are mistakes) of Thucydides. We should not forget that Thucydides did not pay much attention to problems of finance. He does not mention two of the most

¹ I. G², I, 364, 365, 366

² I. G², I, 342. The first four figures have not been preserved and have been wrongly restored in the ed. min.

significant events in Athenian financial history, the decree of Callias and Cleon's 'doubling' of the tribute in 425. He does not tell us how much money was brought from Delos at the time of the transfer of the federal treasury. Rarely does he mention any figures at all; and they are generally round figures.¹ Let us remember also that for twenty years after 424 he was an exile from Athens. His mistakes will not then seem altogether incompatible with that scrupulous conscientiousness which is his avowed principle and general characteristic.

¹ Thuc. II. 70, 97, III. 19.

