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VOLUME V

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The Fifth Century B.C.

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CONTENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MAPS

TEXT-FIGURES

PREFACE

This volume is unlike any which has preceded it. Earlier volumes have covered the whole of the Mediterranean and Near East. We hardly stray beyond Greece, deferring developments elsewhere to Volume VI. We are thus stressing that this is a period when, for the first and last time before the Romans, great political and military power on the one hand and cultural importance on the other, including the presence of historians to describe that power, are located in the same place. By contrast, Persia and the empires which preceded it were powerful but not articulate; the Jews were articulate but not powerful. This gives the volume a coherence which its predecessors and immediate successors lack.

Some of the coherence arises from the nature of our sources, which make an Athenian standpoint hard to avoid. That point was noticed by Sallust in the first century B.C.:

> As I reckon it, the actions of the Athenians were indeed vast and magnificent, but rather less substantial than report makes them. But because writers of genius grew up there, Athenian deeds are renowned as the greatest throughout the world. The talent of those who did them is judged by the powers of praise of these outstanding literary geniuses. (*Bell. Cat.* 8.2–4)

In this volume we shift Sallust's emphasis, and regard the efflorescence of literature (and art) as itself a major historical phenomenon to be examined and explained. Much of the cultural achievement survives, for us to assess by our own criteria. Fluctuations in the reputation of individuals and of styles will continue, but they are not likely to diminish the position of the fifth century, particularly at Athens, as the first Classic age of European civilization, important not only for its own achievements, but for the power of those achievements to influence later generations and take new forms in their hands. Even if the events of the period had no intrinsic interest, they would still be precious for our understanding of the cultural heritage.

The events themselves certainly do have great intrinsic interest. The transformation of the Delian League, created to continue the Greek fight against Persia, into an empire run in the interests of Athens, is a textbook

case in the history of imperialism. The development of Athenian democracy, the beginnings of which we saw in the last volume, into an experiment in direct government by a largish citizen body, produced political concepts and political thinking which have remained of permanent importance. That the volume ends with the collapse of both the empire and the democracy raises perennial questions about the reconciliation of political justice and political efficiency. These themes are visible in many of our sources, but were most notably transmitted and interpreted by Thucydides, one of the most gifted historians of any age: it should be added that perhaps his most remarkable achievement was to transmute even military narrative into a commentary on the human condition.

On the international plane, events were shaped by the break, at first gradual, which split the victorious Greek allies of 480–79. There were always those, at both Athens and Sparta, whose ideal was continued collaboration; but events were too strong for them, and our concept of the century is shaped by the polarity between the Spartan alliance, land-based, with a fairly narrow and specialized governing group at its centre, and the Athenian empire, largely maritime and with a democracy at its centre. Various later generations have found contemporary resonances which have encouraged them to perpetuate the concept of this polarity. The different nature of the power-bases certainly did much to shape the course of the eventual struggle of the Peloponnesian War.

Some of the factors which made the cultural achievement possible are clear. First, success in the Persian Wars was itself a heroic achievement, which provided new epic themes and the impulse to celebrate them. Secondly, as Athens became more important politically, it became more likely to attract individuals who might find it a more stimulating environment than their own cities. This was a cumulative process and must have developed existing talent. Thirdly, the economic gains of empire (not simply the tribute paid by the allies, important though that was) made projects possible for the Athenians which had hitherto been peculiar to kings and tyrants. Why the Athenian citizen-body itself commanded a gene-pool of such potentiality is beyond us.

Though Athens dominates our sources for this volume, it is nevertheless called 'The Fifth Century' instead of the 'Athens' of the first edition. But we have tried not to draw too sharp a line between Archaic and Classical Greece; and there is a sense in which the last decade of our period, with a weakened Athens and a renascent Persia, looks forward to the shape of the fourth century. The more general title reflects the fact that the story of the fifth century is not just an Athenian story. Even at the cultural level, the temple of Zeus at Olympia had emerged, some years earlier than the Parthenon, from a separate and different set of

social and political circumstances. The great sanctuaries continued to follow their own individual lines of development, and their festivals created forms of literature not found at Athens. Developments in the many minor Greek states were influenced by emulation of their larger neighbours. Models of comfort and society elsewhere stimulated urban development in more backward areas. Smaller communities saw the advantages of combining into bigger ones, for example, Olynthus in 432 and Rhodes in 408. Exiles and migrants from long-established states took their ideas of the good life to foundations like Thurii and Amphipolis or areas like Macedon where urbanism did not exist.

This presupposed the polis as the Greek way of life. There were other forms of political development, but they are harder to trace during our period. Gelon's creation of an extended Syracuse collapsed. Successive kings of Macedon struggled to preserve and centralize their kingdom; they too used urbanization as one of their principal tools. The Athenians, who had exploited ties of racial relationship with their allies when they created the Delian League, nevertheless did not use them to break down citizenship barriers between one polis and another. Athenian citizenship became more, not less, restricted during our period. Pericles boasted of the advantages of equal opportunity for citizens at home, but neither he nor the Athenian people saw merit in extending it further. Cleon may have been right to say that democracy could not rule an empire. This volume closes in uncertainty as to whether the Spartan oligarchy would be more successful.

The framework of this volume is different from that of the first edition. We have been more explicit on questions of historical method. We have tried to achieve closer integration of Athenian external and internal history. Separate chapters on drama, philosophy, historiography and art have been replaced by an attempt to show the cultural achievements in their historical, social and religious contexts. The bibliographies in such intensely cultivated fields can make no real attempt at completeness and mostly represent work directly referred to by our contributors; we have slightly amplified the form of reference to them used in previous volumes. We continue our practice of including a map reference after a name in the index, instead of compiling a separate index of names for each map.

The volume has been long in preparation, and scrutiny of our attempts to keep it up to date may well reveal unavoidable inconsistencies. Of our contributors, Professor A. Andrewes, who gave sage counsel in the planning stage and thereafter, and Professor R. E. Wycherley have not lived to see the completed volume; these are personal losses as well as losses to scholarship.

We are grateful to Simon Hornblower for help in the closing stages of

preparation, and for the patience, skill and care with which we have been tended by the staff of the Cambridge University Press, in particular by Pauline Hire. Professor Rhodes wishes to thank Dr O. P. T. K. Dickinson, and, for financial assistance, the University of Durham. Text illustrations, when not derived from a stated source, have been prepared by Marion Cox. Fuller illustration will appear in the Plates Volume which is intended to accompany both Volume v and the forthcoming Volume vi. The maps have been drawn by Euromap Ltd; the index was compiled by Barbara Hird.

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NOTE ON FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

Works cited in the various sections of the Bibliography are referred to in footnotes by author and date, followed by the appropriate section letter, the number assigned to the work in that section, the volume number, page references etc. Thus Pritchett 1965 (A 100) I 5 is a reference to p. 5 of vol. I of W. K. Pritchett's *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography* – no. 100 of Bibliography A: General.